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GREAT OPERAS
IN SYNOPSIS



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Maria Callas as Floria Tosca in the Metropolitan Opera's production.

GREAT OPERAS IN SYNOPSIS

BY

ARTHUR JACOBS

AND

STANLEY SADIE

THOMAS Y. CROWELL COMPANY

NEW YORK

ESTABLISHED 1834

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INTRODUCTION

OPERA is a complex, strange and ever-fascinating art. In combining the form of a visual drama with that of a musical work, composers have been influenced not only by the musical means at their disposal but by theatrical practice and by the theatrical and literary tastes of their audiences. The musical scores which now delight us are the result of an encounter between the composer's genius and a variety of other factors—even, as in the case of *Rigoletto* and other Verdi operas, the hand of the political censor.

Yet the composer dominates. He dominates so strongly as to please not merely the audiences of his own time but the audiences of times to come—whose attitude to theatrical and other matters may have changed considerably. Beaumarchais's *Le Mariage de Figaro* and Sardou's *La Tosca* have retreated into the historian's cupboard; Mozart's and Puccini's operas are the continuing delight of operatic audiences from Montreal to Moscow.

Opera is fully captured only in the theatre, and normally—unless we wish to assume that composers did not know what they were doing—only when the words are fully understood, either by performance in the audience's language or by full comprehension of the original. The English words quoted in this book are taken, wherever possible, from English versions which have been used in actual performance at Covent Garden, Sadler's Wells or elsewhere.

But we give the textual quotations in the original language too, not least in order to aid those who come to opera by the many fine gramophone recordings now available. For these, too, we depart from most previous books on opera in listing the characters not in order of importance in the drama but in order of singing, and we list (on pages 365–70) recommended complete recordings of the operas mentioned.

As a general rule we name our characters in the language used by the composer himself. But where the plots are classical or biblical or based on English literary sources we use the accepted English form: and we allow certain eminent historical figures also to keep their well-known English forms, e.g. King Philip of Spain. In the theatre, the opera-lover must be prepared for occasional changes: for instance, as the action of *La Traviata* takes place in France and is based on a French play, a production of the opera in English may prefer French names to those Italian ones which the composer, in accordance with Italian theatrical usage, substituted.

Our synopses cover in detail sixty-one of the recognized classics of

opera by thirty-two composers from Purcell to Britten. Many other operas and composers are mentioned in passing. Of those operas treated in detail each is discussed in three parts: General introduction—Synopsis—Musical commentary. The operas are grouped under their composers, and composers arranged in roughly chronological order within their countries. A narrative links each composer with the one preceding.

We are conscious, of course, of having had to restrict our choice in order to keep the book within its bounds; and we have excluded operetta altogether (even a work as fully a part of the opera-house repertory as *Die Fledermaus*). We offer our apologies to those whose favourites have had to be omitted—as, indeed, have been some of our own! The musical comments do not attempt the impossible task of reproducing all the principal tunes: they are chosen with the particular purpose of illuminating each composer's typical way of working on the intimate fusion of music and drama. In addition, our pages provide—by means of the linking narrative, a Prologue ('Early Opera') and an Epilogue ('The Modern Scene')—a compressed history of opera itself. Throughout the book, a date against an opera is, unless otherwise indicated, the date of first production, not necessarily of composition.

Our thanks are due to Mr. Winton Dean, whose reading of this book in typescript was of great help.

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STANLEY SADIE

PROLOGUE

Early Opera

THE use of singing as an element in drama dates at least back to the Greeks, and the medieval mystery plays used it too. (One of these, *The Play of Daniel*, dating from the twelfth century, has enjoyed successful modern revival.) But opera as we know it traces its birth to the Renaissance, and in particular to the period of about 1600, in Florence. It arose from such earlier dramatic forms as the madrigal drama, the pastoral, and the masque.

Daphne, produced in 1597 with music by Jacopo Peri (1561-1633), is considered the first 'real' opera: and its employment of classical myth for its plot not only reflected the Renaissance ideal of recapturing the Greek spirit but also was prophetic of much opera to come.

These Florentine operas were the private affair of noble society. So were the early operas of Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643), including another treatment of classical myth: *Orpheus* (in full, *La Favola d'Orfeo*, 'The Story of Orpheus'), which was produced in 1607 and is the earliest opera still to make occasional appearances in the professional theatre. But in 1637 the first public opera-house was founded, in Venice, and it was for a public audience that Monteverdi's later operas were written. The last was *The Coronation of Poppea* (*L'Incoronazione di Poppea*) of 1642, in which the mutual passion of the emperor Nero and Poppea triumphs over morality and justice and sends the legitimate empress Octavia into exile.

Opera is an Italian word (properly meaning simply a work, and still sometimes employed in Italian in that sense: the strict Italian word for our 'opera' is *melodramma*). The form spread elsewhere from Italy, partly in the composition of original operas in other tongues. The first great composer of French opera, significantly, was a Florentine by birth: Jean Baptiste Lully (1632-87), who entered the service of Louis XIV. Heinrich Schütz (1585-1672), who composed the first German opera, *Daphne*, in 1627, had studied music in Italy with Giovanni Gabrieli (1557-1612).

In England, the court masques performed in the early seventeenth century under James I and Charles I approached the idea of opera. Then in 1656, although the public theatres were closed under the Commonwealth, a dramatic work called *The Siege of Rhodes* with music by five different composers was semi-publicly given in London: it is often reckoned the first English opera.

COMPOSERS AND THEIR OPERAS

I

HENRY PURCELL

(1659-95)

AMONG the earliest operas holding the stage in English-speaking countries is an English one: *Dido and Aeneas*. It might be imagined that this is, so to speak, the choicest flower of a whole garden of English opera cultivated by Henry Purcell and his contemporaries. This is not so. *Dido and Aeneas* is a freak growth, standing almost on its own.

Purcell's teacher, John Blow (1649-1708), had written a short, all-sung musical drama, *Venus and Adonis*, presented at court about 1684; and to some extent this served as a model for *Dido and Aeneas*. But except in this work Purcell followed the taste of the town and provided 'operas' which we should rather call spectacular plays with music. Not all the characters sang. In *King Arthur* (1691), with libretto by Dryden, King Arthur himself does not sing a note. Such works have reasonably been termed 'semi-operas' by later historians. But *Dido and Aeneas*, despite its brevity (it plays for less than an hour) is a real, all-sung opera.

DIDO AND AENEAS

Libretto by Nahum Tate, after Virgil

First performed: Chelsea, London, 1689

Three Acts

Cast in order of singing:

Belinda, lady-in-waiting to Dido	<i>soprano</i>
Dida, Queen of Carthage	<i>soprano</i>
Another lady-in-waiting	<i>mezzo-soprano</i>
Aeneas, a Trojan prince	<i>tenor (or high baritone)</i>
A sorceress	<i>mezzo-soprano</i>
Two witches	<i>two sopranos</i>
A spirit	<i>soprano</i>
A sailor	<i>tenor</i>

Chorus of courtiers, people, witches and sailors

The scene is laid in ancient Carthage

Josias Priest was a dancing-master who presumably met Purcell when both were working in the London professional theatre. Priest also ran a school for 'young gentlewomen' at Gorges House in Chelsea (which was reckoned, at that time, near London but not within London), and it was for this school that Purcell wrote *Dido and Aeneas*—perhaps for an out-of-door performance.

It is not known whether 'young gentlewomen' sang all the solo roles except that of Aeneas and the Sailor, or merely undertook the top line of the chorus, plus the dancing. Professional singers must, to a greater or lesser extent, have aided them. Aeneas's part is often sung by a baritone today, but Purcell intended a tenor. The composer himself probably directed the performance from a harpsichord, as was then customary. Strings alone form the rest of the orchestra.

The climax of the opera is Dido's farewell song, 'When I am laid in earth'. With it, Dido, having been deserted by Aeneas (who has been tricked into his desertion by witchcraft), dies—whether of a broken heart or by suicide the text leaves in doubt. The emotional power of this song, which has become a classic of the concert-hall too, is partly responsible for the success of the opera in both professional and amateur performances.

ACT I

Belinda is endeavouring to cheer her royal mistress. The courtiers recognize that love for Aeneas (who, having fled from the sack of Troy, is a guest at the court) is making Dido unhappy; they urge her to marry him and thus to unite the thrones of Carthage and Troy. Aeneas enters and declares his love, and the music celebrates the triumph of love as the courtiers depart on a hunting party.

ACT II

In a cave, a sorceress is conjuring up her witches. They hate Dido and resolve to strike her by sending a false spirit, disguised as Mercury, to make Aeneas leave; in the meantime they will raise a storm to spoil the hunt. The spell is worked to an echo-chorus ('In our deep vaulted cell' . . . 'ted cell'). A rapid dance movement, also using the echo principle, follows.

The scene changes to a grove, where the hunt is taking place. An air is sung by Belinda, and another ('Oft she visits') by the other lady-in-waiting. Dido's women dance to entertain Aeneas, who displays the head of a boar he has killed. A storm arises and all flee back to town—all except Aeneas, to whom the false Mercury appears, announcing that Jove commands him to abandon the delights of love and sail away that very night. Aeneas laments but accepts the command. [Here should follow a scene and dance for the sorceress and witches: see below, page 6.]

ACT III

Aeneas's sailors, at the ships, are preparing for their departure; they sing, with one of them as soloist, a song with lines immemorially suited to thier trade:

Take a boozy short leave of your nymphs on the shore,
And silence their mourning
With vows of returning
Though never intending to visit them more.

The sorceress and witches observe the spectacle with glee, their vengeful chorus alluding to Dido by her alternative name of Elissa:

Destruction's our delight,
Delight our greatest sorrow;
Elissa dies tonight,
And Carthage flames tomorrow.

The witches and sailors dance simultaneously.

Dido enters, heartbroken that Aeneas proposes to leave her. He says he will stay after all; but now Dido will have none of him. She dismisses him and he heads for his ships. A brief, grave chorus of courtiers leads to Dido's recitative, 'Thy hand, Belinda', and to the air 'When I am laid in earth', in which the words 'Remember me' are insistently repeated. Dido dies; a chorus mourns her; and the opera is over.

* * *

Purcell's marvellously apt musical setting of the English language shows itself particularly in recitative—and Aeneas, incidentally, has nothing but recitative to sing. The other numbers range, within one unified style, from the 'popular' idiom of the sailor's chorus to the 'learned' construction of

[Slow]
DIDO

Voice

When I am laid, — am laid — in earth, may my

[p]

Orch.

[upper parts omitted]

wrongs cre ate no trou - ble, no trou - ble in thy breast;

(Ex. 1)

a chaconne. Dido's first song, 'Ah, Belinda', is a chaconne, being built on a regularly repeated four-bar phrase in the bass; so, too, is 'Oft she visits' and so (even more subtly, because the repeated phrase is not four but five bars long) is 'When I am laid in earth' itself (Ex. 1).

There is a particular puzzle about the score of *Dido and Aeneas* as it has come down to us. A study of the rather complicated key-structure of the opera suggests that some music is missing at the end of Act II; moreover, Purcell normally ends each scene of a major work with a chorus, which is not the case here. Suspicion grows more positive with the discovery that a contemporary printed libretto shows the act ending with six more lines (for the sorceress and witches) plus a dance. The probability is that Purcell did compose music for this—music which has now been lost. The practice of many modern editors and conductors is to supply music in its place from other works by Purcell.

GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL

(1685-1759)

FIFTEEN years after Purcell's death Handel first set foot in England; he was naturalized there in 1726. Though his larger works later took the form of English oratorios (on religious subjects) and other (non-religious) dramatic music not intended for the stage, his first years in London were chiefly devoted to establishing himself there as a composer of Italian opera. This type of opera—all sung, without spoken dialogue, using recitative accompanied by harpsichord to link the formal numbers—had captured fashionable taste all over Europe.

Meanwhile English native opera languished. The only English work of the period to achieve lasting success was *The Beggar's Opera* (1728); it is classified by historians as a 'ballad opera' because it uses well-known tunes of the day (set to new words, by John Gay) though it is basically not an opera in the usual sense but a play, calling for actors who can manage to deliver simple, short songs. Later versions, notably Frederic Austin's (1920) and Benjamin Britten's (1948), are considerably more 'operatic' than the original.

Serious eighteenth-century Italian opera of Handel's type tends by our standards to seem dramatically stiff. In particular, the great majority of arias are in the *da capo* form—first part, middle part, then first part repeated, usually ornamented—which restricts development of character or situation within an aria; and, by a further convention, after each aria its singer leaves the stage. (These conventions largely served the purposes of the singers themselves, whose 'prima donna' behaviour and attitudes were notorious.) Handel, as recent revivals have strikingly shown, often transcends these limitations, sometimes by modifying the forms to suit the dramatic context, but more often by the sheer force and character of the music he writes within the accepted forms.

It has lately been suggested that his oratorios and similar works in English, to which these conventions did not apply, are dramatically more satisfactory than his operas. Several of them have been revived on the stage; the secular *Semele* (1744) and *Hercules* (1745), both on mythological plots, have had particular success.

Among his Italian operas, the most frequently revived (especially in Germany) has been *Julius Caesar* (Giulio Cesare; 1724). Others given lately include the first opera Handel wrote for London, *Rinaldo* (1711); the

rather lighter *Xerxes* (Serse; 1738), an aria of which is the famous so-called Handel's Largo (actually headed *Larghetto*!); and several of the particularly fine group which includes *Tamerlane* (Tamerlano; 1724) and *Rodelinda* (1725). *Alcina* (see below) is notable for having been seen in London in three different post-war productions.

ALCINA

*Libretto by an unknown author, after Antonio Marchi,
based on an episode in Ariosto's 'Orlando Furioso'*

First performed: London, 1735

Three Acts

Cast in order of singing:

Morgana, Alcina's sister	<i>soprano</i>
Alcina, an enchantress	<i>soprano</i>
Ruggiero, a knight, betrothed to Bradamante	<i>male alto</i>
	[see below]
Bradamante	<i>contralto</i>
Oronte, Alcina's general	<i>tenor</i>
Melisso, Bradamante's guardian	<i>bass</i>

Chorus of Alcina's attendants and her former lovers

The scene is laid on Alcina's magic island

Handel's opera plots are usually derived from classical mythology or medieval legend; many of the librettos are based on the epic poetry of Tasso or (as in the case of *Alcina*) Ariosto. Spectacle and magic were an important ingredient of opera in the baroque period (1600-1750). The plots provided opportunities for such scenic display but rarely had much dramatic realism; their main function was to supply situations which could give rise to arias in a wide range of moods. This is certainly true of *Alcina*, where the modern audience is given not merely the opportunity to hear brilliant singing but the sense of universal emotions of joy and grief portrayed by subtle musical art. In cold print, however, the plot may seem dauntingly complex.

Admittedly, even in the theatre Handel's operas are long and rather slow-moving. Being designed for audiences which listened with only intermittent concentration, they are usually heavily cut for modern performance. In *Alcina*, the unimportant character of Oberto is generally omitted, so the episodes concerning him are excluded from the following synopsis, as are a number of other sections which are conventionally cut

today. The aria ending Act I ('Tornami a vagheggiar') is often, rather unsuitably, allocated in modern performances to Alcina rather than Morgana (though there is precedent for this switch in some of Handel's own performances).

Unlike most of Handel's operas, *Alcina* includes ballet—not because of any inner dramatic necessity but simply because Handel wanted to make use of a ballet company which was visiting London in 1735. It also uses a chorus, which is hardly less unusual.

The part of Ruggiero was originally designed for a male alto—a *castrato*, not a counter-tenor; today it is generally allotted to a contralto. (The problem of the *castrato* voice in early operas is discussed more fully on page 14.)

ACT I

Bradamante (in male attire, as a warrior) and her guardian Melisso have been searching for Ruggiero, Bradamante's betrothed, and are shipwrecked on an island ruled by the enchantress, Alcina. They are met by Alcina's sister, Morgana, who is attracted to Bradamante and begins to fall in love with 'him'.

Suddenly there is lightning and thunder, and the scene dissolves. Alcina is seen in her palace with Ruggiero. Her attendants sing in praise of the delights of her island; a ballet follows. Alcina welcomes the strangers and bids Ruggiero entertain them; she herself sings of her love for him: 'Tell, o tell' (Di, cor mio).¹

Alcina goes, and Bradamante and Melisso try to remind Ruggiero of his duty towards his betrothed, Bradamante (Bradamante herself poses as Ricciardo, her own brother), but he says that he now loves only Alcina. Oronte, Alcina's general, enters; he loves Morgana and denounces 'Ricciardo', who seems to be his rival. Bradamante addresses Oronte and Morgana alternately in an aria: 'Tis jealousy' (E gelosia).

Oronte tells Ruggiero that Alcina herself is attracted by 'Ricciardo', and that he (Ruggiero) may soon join Alcina's former lovers in their various forms as wild beasts, trees and the like, to which she has transformed them. He warns Ruggiero of the fickleness of women: 'Can you a woman thus believe?' (Semplicetto! a donna credi?).

Alcina joins Ruggiero and denies his charge that she is fickle. She leaves. Bradamante tells Ruggiero of her true identity, although Melisso tries to stop her. Ruggiero, however, does not believe she is other than 'Ricciardo': 'Each look I know' (La bocca vaga).

Melisso and then Morgana try to persuade Bradamante to leave the dangerous island. But Bradamante is still determined to reclaim Ruggiero, and will not. Morgana, still believing that Bradamante is 'Ricciardo' and

¹ English version by Charles Farncombe.

in love with her, promises to intercede with Alcina, who will be furious on finding that 'Ricciardo' evidently prefers another to her. Morgana sings of her love for 'Ricciardo': 'My soul is full of you alone' (*Tornami a vagheggiar*).

ACT II

In a hall of Alcina's palace, Ruggiero sings of his love for her. Melisso enters in the form of Atlante, Ruggiero's former tutor. Ruggiero is confused. Melisso puts a magic ring on Ruggiero's finger, breaking Alcina's spell. The splendid hall becomes an empty desert, and Ruggiero returns to his senses and no longer feels love for Alcina. Melisso (now also in his normal form) reminds him of his betrothed, Bradamante: 'Think of the fair' (*Pensa a chi geme*).

Bradamante herself enters. But still Ruggiero is not convinced of her identity, suspecting some further plot on Alcina's part. Bradamante sings angrily of Ruggiero's faithlessness: 'How shall I avenge me' (*Vorrei vendicarmi*). Ruggiero, alone, expresses his confusion: 'Love ever ready' (*Mi lusinga*).

Near her gardens, Alcina is about to transform the uncompliant 'Ricciardo' into a 'brutal shape', but Morgana interrupts her. Ruggiero enters and assures the doubting Alcina of his love (with asides making it clear that his love is really no longer for her).

Oronte comes to Alcina and tells her that Ruggiero intends to leave her. She is both heart-broken and determined on vengeance: 'Ye gentle Gods of love' (*Ah! mio cor!*). Oronte then tells Morgana that her 'lover' is also unfaithful. But she still rejects the love which Oronte himself offers; she goes, and he sings of his 'Ill-placed love' (*E un folle*).

Bradamante and Ruggiero (at last free of illusions) enter and embrace, but are seen by the jealous Morgana who angrily goes off to Alcina. Ruggiero bids farewell to the enchanted island: 'Verdant meadows' (*Verdi prati*).

Alcina, alone in an underground room, sings of her desertion by Ruggiero: 'Ah! still my heart' (*Ah! Ruggiero crudel!*). She tries to summon her evil spirits to her aid, but they do not appear: 'You hear, I know' (*Ombre pallide*). She goes off in a rage.

ACT III

Morgana too is now free of illusion. She realizes that 'Ricciardo', whom she loved, is a woman, Bradamante. In a court of the palace, she asks her former suitor, Oronte, to forgive her: 'Believe, dear tyrant, that I grieve' (*Credete al mio dolore*). She departs; before he follows, Oronte admits that he still loves her.

Alcina reproaches Ruggiero for leaving her and swears revenge: 'When

you shall return again' (*Ma quando tornerai*). She leaves and Bradamante enters with Melisso. They talk of the danger of leaving the island; Ruggero, having to part momentarily from Bradamante, compares his situation to that of a tigress having to leave its young: 'The Hyrcanian tigress' (*Sta nell' Ircana*). Bradamante determines to restore Alcina's bewitched former lovers to life: 'A faithful soul' (*All'alma fedel*).

Alcina learns from Oronte that Ruggiero and Bradamante are conquering the island before leaving. She expresses her grief: 'Still fears I have' (*Mi restano le lagrime*).

Ruggiero and Bradamante enter, intent on breaking Alcina's spell before they leave the island. Alcina tries to dissuade them by friendship, in a trio: 'Nor is this love, nor jealousy' (*Non è amor, nè gelosia*). Ruggiero breaks the urn in which Alcina's magical powers are vested; she, with Morgana, vanishes. Alcina's former lovers return to life. Their choruses of joy, and a ballet, end the opera.

* * *

One of the strongest weapons in Handel's musical and dramatic armoury was his fertile and apt melodic gift. At Ruggiero's farewell to Alcina's enchanted island, the melody in which he recalls its 'Verdant meadows' is not merely intensely beautiful in itself, but also serves to convey the mixed feelings—a tinge of nostalgic regret as well as joy and relief—which he experiences:

[Largo]
RUGGIERO

[P] Ver - di pra - ti, sel - ve a - me - ne per - de -
- re - te la - bel - tà

(Ex. 1)

In a style whose musical patterns are mostly very regular, a notable dramatic effect is made by deliberately breaking these patterns. Handel does this several times. One splendid example is at the beginning of Act II, where Ruggiero's aria trails off into recitative on the sudden entry of the disguised Melisso. Another example occurs in Alcina's 'Ah! mio cor'. In an aria of this period it is normal for the singer to enter with the same music as has just been heard in the orchestral introduction; here Alcina enters with an unaccompanied 'sighing' phrase ('Ah! my heart'), and then goes on with a new counter-theme to the original introduction, heard again in the orchestra. The effect is both arresting and moving:

Andante larghetto
ALCINA

[*p*] Ah! mio cor! scher -
Orch. *p* *pp*
- ni - to se - i!
etc.

(Ex. 2)

One customary pattern running through all opera of this kind is the sequence of recitative (accompanied by harpsichord) followed by aria (accompanied by orchestra). This pattern could be broken by using 'accompanied recitative'—recitative in which the orchestra (not just the harpsichord) accompanies, usually in dramatic and illustrative style. There is one such movement in *Alcina*, in the scene at the end of Act II where Alcina tries to conjure up her evil spirits. Oddly enough, the most striking part of this so-called 'accompanied recitative' is entirely unaccompanied. Alcina's agitation is expressed by the chromaticism and the wide 'skips' in her music. 'I seek you, yet you hide? I command you, yet you are silent?' she complains; and the utter emptiness and silence around her phrases conveys her solitariness as the spirits fail to respond:

ALCINA (with violins)

[*f*] Vi cer - co e via scon-de-te? vi co-man-do
e ta-ce-te? ev-vi in-gan-no? ev-vi fro-de?
la mia ver-ga fa-tal non ha pos-san-za?

(Ex. 3)

CHRISTOPH WILLIBALD VON GLUCK

(1714-87)

GLUCK, a Bohemian-German composer who settled in Vienna, greatly admired Handel but rebelled against the formal conventions of the kind of Italian opera which Handel wrote. His aim—in the latter part of his career—was to make opera more truly and more naturally dramatic, more concerned with the powerful representation of emotion and less with displaying singers' virtuosity.

But because the abuses which Gluck rebelled against are largely unfamiliar today, the extent of his reforming zeal is now not too evident, and even Gluck's own operas seem sometimes a little formal and stiff. In particular the appearances and miracles of classical deities in such works as *Orpheus* (1762), *Alceste* (1767), *Iphigenia in Aulis* (1774) and *Iphigenia in Tauris* (1779) introduce a note of artificiality. None the less all these are, from time to time, heard today—*Orpheus* in particular.

ORFEO ED EURIDICE

(Orpheus and Eurydice)

Libretto by Ranieri Calzabigi

Italian version first performed: Vienna, 1762

French version (Orphée et Euridice) first performed: Paris, 1774

Three Acts

Cast in order of singing:

Orpheus	<i>male alto</i> [see below]
Eros	<i>soprano</i>
A Blessed Spirit	<i>soprano</i>
Eurydice	<i>soprano</i>

Chorus of shepherds and shepherdesses, furies, demons and Blessed Spirits

The scene is laid in Ancient Greece, Hades and the Elysian Fields

The story of Orpheus and Eurydice has appealed to many composers of opera—from Peri and Monteverdi (already mentioned) to Darius Milhaud

(b. 1892), who, in *The Sorrows of Orpheus* (1926), transposed the action to modern times. According to legend, Orpheus's magical power as a musician enabled him to regain his wife from the dead on condition that he did not look at her on the journey back from Hades—a condition he was unable to fulfil. In Gluck's opera a further miracle then happens so that Eurydice is resurrected and joins him after all.

Despite the artificiality of this resurrection, Gluck's *Orpheus* is felt as deeply expressive of real emotion—human love, the terror of hidden dark forces, the vision of unearthly bliss. Chorus and orchestra are fully used by Gluck to deepen the pathos suggested by the plight of the protagonist.

In most modern productions, the role of Orpheus is sung by a contralto. (The practice originated with the revival of the opera in 1859 by Berlioz, an ardent champion of Gluck.) This was not Gluck's intention. He wrote the role for a *castrato* male alto, Gaetano Guadagni. The *castrato* voice was, according to historical accounts, by no means effeminate-sounding, and *castrati* (not tenors!) were at that time generally allotted the heroic parts in opera.

A contralto, unless she can almost overcome the implications of womanliness in voice and demeanour, is therefore a dubious substitute. There are three other alternatives. The part could be given to a modern counter-tenor (that is, a natural male alto), singing the actual notes Gluck wrote. This has apparently never been tried on the stage; the counter-tenor voice is rather weak for a large opera house. Or a baritone can take the part, singing an octave lower. Or the part can be rewritten for a tenor—and Gluck himself rewrote it so for the Paris production in French in 1774. This rewriting of the title-role, with some consequent shifts in the keys, was not the only change Gluck made in the French version. Modern performances generally adopt some features of the original (Italian) score, some of the French one.

The god of love appears in the original score under his Latin name, Amor; proper English usage, alongside the other Greek names, is Eros.

ACT I

Orpheus and his friends are weeping at the tomb of Eurydice. In answer to his cries Eros, the god of love, appears. He tells Orpheus that Zeus has had pity on him and will allow him to go down to Hades, charm its guardians by the power of his music, and bring Eurydice back—provided he does not look at her on the way. Orpheus, confident, sets out.

ACT II

At the mouth of Hades, the furies and demons at first violently resist Orpheus's coming, with repeated shouts of 'No!' But gradually he soothes them. Furies and demons disappear; the gates of the Elysian Fields open

and the Dance of the Blessed Spirits is heard. Led by one of their number, the Spirits sing of their joyous existence.

Orpheus himself now enters the Elysian Fields: 'A purer sky' (Che puro ciel).¹ Eurydice is led to him, and he (not looking at her, in obedience to the command) leads her away.

ACT III

Eurydice, uncomprehending, grows restive and suspicious. Can it be that Orpheus no longer loves her? He tries vainly to soothe her and does not tell her the reason for his behaviour. (He has been forbidden to do so.) At length he cannot resist Eurydice's urging and turns and embraces her. Immediately she dies.

Orpheus gives way to his grief: 'Shall no more my arms enfold her?' (Che farò senza Euridice?). He is on the point of joining his wife in death when Eros again appears, tells Orpheus that his constancy has been tested enough, and restores Eurydice to him. A chorus in praise of love formally seals the opera.

* * *

It is in this opera that Orpheus sings Gluck's most famous air, 'Shall no more my arms enfold her?' It is a strange air—strange because, despite its pathetic words and the sense of agonized loss which it supposedly expresses, its straightforward, major-key tune has none of the purely musical features which normally convey pathos or agony:

Andante con moto
ORPHEUS

P Chè fa - rò sen - za Eu - ri - di - ce, do - ve an -
- drò sen - za il mio ben? che fa - rò, do - ve an -
- drò, che fa - rò sen - za il mio ben?

(Ex. 1)

The use of the chorus as a main participant in the drama was a revolutionary step on Gluck's part. So was his dispensing with so-called 'dry recitative' (accompanied only by the harpsichord, as in Handel's operas) and having all recitative accompanied by the orchestra, thus helping to make recitative and aria sound more nearly homogeneous and avoiding breaks in continuity. Equally individual is Gluck's imaginative use of

¹ English version by Edward J. Dent (O.U.P.).

the orchestra. The furies and demons call on Cerberus to destroy the interloper, and the terrifying barking of the monster is represented by a weird orchestral sound which sends cellos and double-basses sliding up to repeated, emphatic high notes:

Andante

gli ur - li di Cer - be - ro

Chorus

[*f*]

[upper orchestral part omitted]

poco f

[+ 8va lower]

(Ex. 2)

A more familiar instrumental effect in *Orpheus* is that in the Dance of the Blessed Spirits, often heard in the concert-hall. The famous 'celestial' melody is often hailed as one which could only have been given to the flute. But it wasn't! Gluck gave it to a treble recorder; and though flute-players have appropriated it, it ought to be restored.

II

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

(1756-91)

IN contrast to serious eighteenth-century Italian opera, with its plots concerning lofty heroes and heroines in remote times, there grew up a type of Italian comic opera which dealt with the present day and put dramatic emphasis on intrigue and absurdity. This type of opera (often referred to as *opera buffa*, which is just the Italian for 'comic opera') was originally often performed as an interlude in the performance of a serious opera (*opera seria*). Like its serious relative, *opera buffa* used recitative and not spoken dialogue to link the songs.

The centre of this type of Italian comic opera was Naples, and it was there in 1733 that the most famous example (and almost the only one still performed today) had its first performance: *The Maid as Mistress* (*La Serva Padrona*) by Pergolesi (1710-36). Most other works ascribed to Pergolesi, by the way, are not his but were given his name after his early death in order to win them popularity. Among these 'non-Pergolesi' works is the opera *The Music Master* (*Il Maestro di Musica*), which is apparently an altered version of a work by a virtually unknown composer, Auletta.

Comic opera of this type—especially in its device of putting all the characters on the stage together so that by singing 'against' each other they can represent a point of maximum dramatic complexity—is an important ingredient in the operatic style of Mozart, as in *The Marriage of Figaro*. He also used the 'lofty' style of serious Italian opera in two mature works, *Idomeneo* and *The Clemency of Titus* (*La Clemenza di Tito*; 1791). His German operas, *The Seraglio* and *The Magic Flute*, differ from his Italian not merely in language but in using elements of a more popular musical style and in using spoken dialogue in place of recitative. This type of German opera was of recent origin: in its simpler form it was called *singspiel* (literally, a singing play).

IDOMENEO

Idomeneo, Rè di Creta

(Idomeneus, King of Crete)

Libretto by Giambattista Varesco

First performed: Munich, 1781

Three Acts

Cast in order of singing:

Ilia, a Trojan princess, prisoner to the Cretans	<i>soprano</i>
Idamantes, son of Idomeneus	<i>male soprano</i> (see below)
Electra, a Greek princess, refugee in Crete	<i>soprano</i>
Arbaces, friend of Idamantes	<i>baritone</i>
Idomeneus, King of Crete	<i>tenor</i>
The High Priest of Neptune	<i>tenor</i>

Chorus of people, priests, soldiers and dancers
The scene is laid in ancient Crete

This is an 'old-fashioned' opera by the young Mozart, using a classical plot (King Idomeneus, 'Idomeneo' in Italian, is mentioned in Homer and Virgil), rather stiff action and stilted language. The original cast had an adult male *castrato* soprano as the youthful hero, Idamantes. Today the role can either be given to a female soprano or (as at Glyndebourne and Sadler's Wells) transposed down an octave for a tenor—a procedure entailing alterations of balance in the ensembles. Though lacking some of the warm humanity of Mozart's later and better-known works, the opera still justifies occasional revival. The contrast in music between the two women who are rivals for the young man's love is very effective. The quartet in the third act was considered by Edward J. Dent 'perhaps the most beautiful ensemble ever composed for the stage', and the chorus of farewell in the preceding act has enjoyed fame even when the opera has remained unperformed. The two arias for Arbaces, a subordinate role, are usually omitted in the theatre so as to tauten the action and reduce the opera's excessive length.

ACT I

Ilia, a Trojan princess, gives vent to her torn feelings. The Cretans, to whom she is prisoner, are her enemies—but how can she hate them when she has fallen in love with Idamantes, the king's son? She fears he loves Electra. Idamantes enters and declares his admiration for her. The Cretan people and their Trojan prisoners sing together in praise of peace, for King Idomeneus's returning fleet has been sighted.

Electra, as a refugee from Greece, is outraged at the mercy shown to the Trojans, her people's enemies. But she is interrupted by Arbaces with the news that Idomeneus's ship has been wrecked. Electra rages: if the king dies, what can stop Idamantes from marrying her rival, Ilia?

Electra's aria of rage merges into the rage of a storm on a deserted beach, where the people implore the gods' mercy for the shipwrecked sailors (who are heard in the distance). Eventually Idomeneus himself

lands, dismisses his attendants and reveals that he vowed, if he were saved from the storm, to sacrifice to Neptune the first person he met.

The first person he meets is Idamantes, his son. They have not seen one another for many years and do not recognize each other: when he discovers who Idamantes is, Idomeneus turns away in horror, leaving his son alone to express his puzzlement. The people enter, rejoicing at the king's safety and praising Neptune.

ACT II

Idomeneus discloses his terrible secret to his friend, Arbaces, who advises him to send Idamantes away to avoid his fate. Idomeneus decides to let Idamantes escort Electra back to Greece. Arbaces, after an aria, departs; Ilia enters and tells Idomeneus of her gratitude in finding a second homeland in Crete and a second father in him: 'Deprived of my father' (*Se il padre perdei*).¹ As she leaves, Idomeneus realizes that she loves his son; alas, it seems that Neptune will claim as victims not only Idamantes but Ilia and Idomeneus too. He sings of the disquiet in his heart: 'Though from storm at sea delivered' (*Fuor del mar ho un mar in seno*).

Electra sings happily of the prospect of being accompanied by Idamantes. A march calls her to the harbour to embark, where a chorus bids her a gentle farewell: 'Calm is the sea, before us now' (*Placido è il mar, andiamo*). As Idamantes and Electra take leave of Idomeneus, a fearful storm breaks and a monster arises from the sea, indicating the gods' anger. While the people flee in terror Idomeneus declares he is the guilty one.

ACT III

Ilia sings of her love for Idamantes: 'Gentle zephyrs soft caressing' (*Zeffiretti lusinghieri*). Idamantes enters; the two declare their love. Idomeneus and Electra enter. Idomeneus has still not told his son about his vow, and now simply bids him go and never return. Ilia is in despair and Electra furious and vengeful over Idamantes's impending departure. A quartet follows, begun by Idamantes: 'Alone I go to wander' (*Andrò ramingo e solo*); then there is an aria for Arbaces.

The sea-monster has ravaged the city and killed thousands. At last, in the temple, the king discloses to the people the vow he made. To avert further disaster, the High Priest and the people call on him to fulfil it. King and priests utter a prayer to Neptune. A shout arises from outside: Idamantes has killed the monster. Now, having learnt about his father's vow, Idamantes presents himself for slaughter. Ilia wishes to take his place. But at the last moment Neptune's oracle intervenes, decreeing that Idomeneus is deposed, and Idamantes is to be king with Ilia as his bride.

¹ English version by the Misses M. and E. Radford.

After expressing her fury, Electra leaves. Idomeneus presents to the people their new king and a chorus of rejoicing ends the opera.

* * *

Mozart wrote *Idomeneo* not long after his return from Paris. During his stay in the French capital a paper 'war' had been afoot between the supporters of Gluck's reform operas and those who preferred the traditional style (represented by Piccinni). Mozart—by instinct rather than

Presto
IDOMENEUS

Voice

Orch.

Spie-ta-tis - si-mi De-i!

IDAMANTES

Me-co com-pian-gi del padre il mio des-

IDOM.

IDAM.

Allegro

-tin? Ah fi-glio! Ah pa-dre! Ah Num-i! do-ve son

i-o? oh qual tras-por-to!

(Ex. 1)

conscious intention—steered a middle course in *Ideomeneo*. Neither he, his singers nor his public wanted to break down, as Gluck was aiming to do, the conventional structure of recitatives and ‘set-piece’ arias. In this, and in his use of the chorus, Mozart followed Piccinni’s example.

None the less, Mozart’s use of accompanied recitative for particularly dramatic passages is much indebted to Gluck’s in *Orpheus* and *Alcestis*. A good example is the moment where Idomeneus and Idamantes recognize one another. It must be remembered that Idomeneus—and the audience—realize the consequences of the situation but Idamantes does not. Idomeneus’s exclamation ‘oh ye pitiless gods!’ is thus greeted by his son with puzzlement: ‘Do you join with me in lamenting my father’s fate?’ (we translate literally). Only when Idomeneus lets fall the word ‘figlio’ (son) does Idamantes know that the father he has lost stands before him (Ex. 1.).

The musical language of the opera is in general rather formal. But when, for special effect, Mozart breaks with this formality, powerful emotional stress results. Thus, notably, the phrase with which Idamantes opens the great quartet in Act III is repeated towards the end; but instead of leading, as before, to an ensemble, it breaks off and the orchestra takes over, and concludes, the music: Idamantes is evidently overcome, and words fail him.

Allegro
IDAMANTES

Voice

[p] An - drò ra - min - go e so - - - -

Orch.

p

lo....

etc.

(Ex. 2)

To emphasize the solemnity of the utterance of the oracle, Mozart brings trombones into the score—as similarly in *Don Giovanni* and *The Magic Flute* (see pages 37 and 48).

DIE ENTFÜHRUNG AUS DEM SERAIL

(The Seraglio)

Libretto by G. Stephanie, after a libretto by C. F. Bretzner

First performed: Vienna, 1782

Three Acts

Cast in order of singing or speaking:

Belmont, a Spanish nobleman	<i>tenor</i>
Osmin, overseer of the Pasha's harem	<i>bass</i>
Pedrillo, servant to Belmont	<i>tenor</i>
The Pasha Selim	<i>speaking part</i>
Constanze, a Spanish noblewoman	<i>soprano</i>
Blonde, Constanze's English maid	<i>soprano</i>

Chorus of janissaries, Turkish women, etc.
The scene is laid in Turkey

Why Seraglio? This Italian term (in modern Italian spelt *serraglio*) is apparently taken from the Latin word for a door-bar in confusion with the Turkish word for a palace. The Italian term has long been used in English. But this is not an Italian opera: English references to the work with the Italian definite article (*Il Seraglio*) have their origin in the fact that virtually all non-Italian operas (even *The Flying Dutchman*) were, from alleged convenience to singers, mounted in Italian in nineteenth-century London. Normal modern English usage is to call the opera *The Seraglio*, but *The Harem* or *Escape from the Harem* would do as well. It is a German opera with spoken dialogue, written for the company that had been specially established for such works by the Emperor Joseph II in Vienna.

It is a comedy about Europeans in a Turkish Pasha's harem, and its chief ingredients are conventional: a well-to-do hero and heroine who are serious characters, and the hero's manservant and the heroine's maid-servant who are comic. The most memorable character, however, is none of these but the overseer of the harem, Osmin—a comic villain and one of the great comic characters of opera. But there is the musical appeal of one of the most famous of all coloratura arias (in which the heroine defies the threat of torture) to add in this opera to the appeal of the comedy, which includes a 'drunk' scene with appropriately rib-tickling music. An oddity of the work is that the Pasha (who in the end is magnanimous enough to let his captives go of his own free will) does not sing at all. There are other inconsistencies of style in the work, but Mozart's felicitous contribution outweighs all defects.

The Spanish names of Belmonte and Constanca are Germanized in Mozart's libretto as Belmont and Constanze.

ACT I

Finding himself outside a big country house, Belmont wonders whether it belongs to the Pasha Selim and if he will find his lost love, Constanze, there. But he gets no satisfaction when he inquires of the Pasha's overseer, Osmin. Osmin persists in singing to himself—'You may think you've found a woman' (*Wer ein Liebchen hat gefunden*)¹—and in taking no notice of his questioner. He discloses, however, that he hates Pedrillo, who is also in the Pasha's service. And when Belmont leaves and Pedrillo appears, Osmin shows his hatred.

Osmin leaves. Belmont returns, finds Pedrillo (his own former servant, now the Pasha's gardener), and learns that Constanze is still true to him. Belmont decides to pose as an eminent visiting architect who could be useful to the Pasha. Before he leaves, he sings of his love: 'How I'm trembling' (*O wie ängstlich*).

The Pasha enters, attended by his suite. He attempts to woo Constanze but she declares she loves another: 'How enchanting, how enraptured' (*Ach, ich liebte*). Constanze leaves, the Pasha accepts the proffered services of Belmont, and the enmity of Osmin towards Belmont and Pedrillo is shown in a brisk trio.

ACT II

In the garden, Blonde (Constanze's maid) sings of her longing for a tender wooer, and in her duet with the coarse Osmin shows the cool disdain appropriate to an Englishwoman.

Constanze, after the Pasha has again attempted to woo her, bewails her sad fate and then voices her defiance: 'Torture me and flay me' (*Martern aller Arten*).

A catchy song for Blonde, looking forward to her release, is followed by a song in which Pedrillo sings of his approaching 'battle'—the battle being concerned with overcoming Osmin by making him drunk, despite the Prophet's injunction against liquor. This is accomplished in a rapid, brief drinking duet, 'Vivat Bacchus', and Osmin is led off. The four lovers are united, Belmont greeting Constanze ecstatically, and then all join in a quartet in which the two men are ready to suspect the women of infidelity but are convincingly reprimanded (Pedrillo with a box on the ear from Blonde). The quartet is developed at length, to affirm the sentiments of love.

¹ English version by Edward J. Dent (O.U.P.).

ACT III

It is midnight; Belmont and Pedrillo are about to put their plan of escape into action. Pedrillo sings, as a signal to the women, the 'oriental' serenade 'Once on Arabia's golden shore' (In Mohrenland). But Osmin, waking, interrupts the attempted abduction, refuses a bribe from Belmont, arrests the four would-be escapers and rejoices: 'Now for righteous retribution!' (Ha! wie will ich triumphieren).

The Pasha, hearing who Belmont really is, discloses that he himself was once wronged by Belmont's father. In revenge, all four captives shall be tortured. A duet of anguish for Belmont and Constanze follows. But the Pasha, reappearing, announces that he despises Belmont's father too much to follow his example and will set the captives free. All four join in giving thanks to the Pasha for his magnanimity; and the frustrated Osmin joins in too, with an empty repetition of the threats in his original song of hatred against Pedrillo (Act I). Osmin apart, their rejoicing is universal as the opera ends.

* * *

At the opening of the eighteenth century the percussion instruments characteristic of Turkish music began to invade European military music. From this came the employment of bass drum, cymbals and triangle in the modern orchestra—and Mozart employs them in the overture to *The Seraglio* precisely to convey oriental 'local colour'. This 'Janissary music', as music with this special percussion effect is called (from the Turkish military corps of Janissaries), recurs in the opera itself; and the male chorus of attendants on the Pasha are themselves described in the score as 'Janissaries'.

The serenade sung in the third act by Pedrillo was presumably also intended by Mozart to have an oriental atmosphere; it has a curious modal scale (not in our modern major or minor keys) which sounds generally 'foreign' rather than specifically oriental to us. The serenade tells of a fair maiden kept prisoner in a Moorish land:

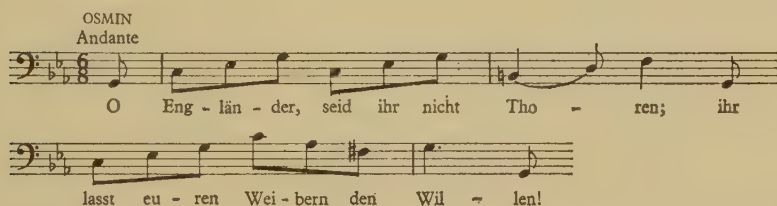
[Allegretto]

PEDRILLO

In Moh - ren - land ge - fan - gen war — ein Mä - del hübsch und
 fein, sah roth und weiss, war schwarz von Haar, seufzt' Tag und Nacht und wein - te
 gar, wollt' gern er - lö - set sein, — wollt' gern er - lö - set sein.

(Ex. 1)

The two comic servants, Pedrillo and Blonde, seem to have a more approachable humanity in their music than their employers. Blonde is supposed to be an Englishwoman, cool and crafty—which means, in an English performance, that Osmin can directly address his audience when exclaiming: ‘What fools are the husbands in England, Such freedom they grant to their wives’:



(Ex. 2)

Belmont and Constanze are personifications of the emotions supposed to be proper to heroes and heroines. Constanze indeed is allowed to take this to extremes in the most famous aria of the work, ‘Torture me and flay me’ (*Martern aller Arten*), in which she declares to the Pasha her determination to resist his advances. This aria is on such an enormous scale, with contrasted sections and with sixty bars of instrumental introduction alone, that it seems to hold up the drama. It requires the full agility of a coloratura soprano (high notes, rapid runs, ornamentation) with more dramatic weight than most such singers can give. In fact, many of the songs are over-long.

The finale of the last act, with verses for different characters and a recurring refrain, is a *vaudeville* in the original and technical sense of that word.

LE NOZZE DI FIGARO

(The Marriage of Figaro)

Libretto by Lorenzo da Ponte, after the Beaumarchais play

First performed: Vienna, 1786

Four Acts

Cast in order of singing:

Figaro, servant to Count Almaviva

Susanna, maid to the Countess Almaviva

Doctor Bartolo

Marcellina (former housekeeper of Dr. Bartolo)

*baritone**soprano**bass**soprano*

Cherubino, a young page in Count Almaviva's service	<i>mezzo-soprano</i> (or <i>soprano</i>)
Count Almaviva	<i>baritone</i>
Don Basilio, a teacher of music	<i>tenor</i>
Countess Almaviva	<i>soprano</i>
Antonio, a gardener to Count Almaviva, and uncle to Susanna	<i>bass</i>
Don Curzio, a lawyer	<i>tenor</i>
Barbarina, daughter of Antonio	<i>soprano</i>

Chorus of villagers

The scene is laid in a castle and its grounds near Seville

Not a few music-lovers would call *The Marriage of Figaro* the greatest comic opera ever written, a spring of bubbling melody set to a sharp, fast-moving, witty plot. It is an opera about masters and servants and the complications in that relationship caused by sex. To the original audience it was an opera on a contemporary subject, with strong political undertones. It was based on a famous French play by an author then still living, Beaumarchais. The play was a sequel to another about the same character, *The Barber of Seville*, which had already been set successfully as an opera—not yet by Rossini but by Giovanni Paisiello (1740–1816).

In *The Barber of Seville* (see page 62), Figaro is the barber and general factotum who outwits Rosina's stupid guardian Bartolo and smoothes the way for the marriage of Count Almaviva and Rosina. Now, in *The Marriage of Figaro*, Rosina has become the Countess and Figaro is the Count's servant. He and the Countess's maid Susanna are betrothed.

The Count and Figaro are both jealous characters, Figaro justifiably so since he knows that the Count himself has designs on Susanna. The words of the libretto make pointed reference to 'the feudal right'. This alludes to the custom by which the lord of the manor, in compensation for the loss of one of his female serfs through marriage, was supposedly allowed to rob the girl of her virginity before the husband took possession. This custom, we learn, has recently been abolished on the Count's estates but, as Figaro puts it, the Count wishes to get back by consent from Susanna the right that he has given up by law.

The situation is complicated not only by the fact that Figaro is virile and self-willed enough to avenge any wrong done to Susanna, but also by the presence in the household of Cherubino, a page-boy—that is, a young man of noble family sent to learn good manners. He is just at an age at which both the Countess and Susanna have to learn not to treat him as a pretty plaything any more. 'He' is sung in the opera by a mezzo-soprano or soprano.

Two arias, one for Marcellina and one for Basilio, are customarily omitted in the final act, and are omitted in the following synopsis.

ACT I

Susanna is trying on a new hat. Figaro, who is to be married to her, is measuring out a room for a bed. But Susanna insists that this room will never do for their bedroom as it is far too near the Count's, and the Count is by no means to be trusted. Figaro vows, however, that if the Count wants to dance, then he shall dance to Figaro's tune—'If you are after a little amusement' (Se vuol ballare).¹ After Figaro's departure Bartolo, who was once outwitted by Figaro, comes in and shows his desire for vengeance. And if Bartolo is angry with Figaro, no less is Marcellina with Susanna, for she wishes to marry Figaro herself. The two women have a duet of mock courtesy: 'I bid you good-day, ma'am' (Via resti servita). Marcellina leaves.

Now enters Cherubino, the page. He declares his boyish passion for the Countess—but it is really a passion for all womankind, as his song shows: 'Is it pain, is it pleasure' (Non so più). The Count's voice is heard and Cherubino (who should not be there at all) hides behind a chair. The Count suggests an assignation with Susanna, but then he has to hide himself when a voice is heard outside. It is that of Don Basilio—a rascally abbé who is music master and organist in the Count's establishment, and general go-between for all manner of intrigue. So the Count is now hiding *behind* a chair and Cherubino *on* the chair, covered by a dress, while Basilio makes insinuations to Susanna about herself and the Count and about Cherubino's interest in the Countess.

The Count, enraged, reveals himself and declares that he is in any case going to get rid of Cherubino because of what happened the other day: he, the Count, was visiting a young lady called Barbarina, and happened to lift up a cloth from a table just in *this* way (and here the Count draws back the covering of the chair in the room where they are) and there was Cherubino hiding! And there, of course, Cherubino is now discovered hiding in exactly the same position. The Count is furious, particularly because Cherubino must have overheard everything, although Cherubino says he did his best not to listen.

The interchange is interrupted by the entry of Figaro with a group of peasants, who strew flowers before the Count: Figaro has come to ask the Count to join him and Susanna in marriage. The Count promises to do so, but puts him off till later, and now tells Cherubino that he must leave the castle and become an ensign in the Count's regiment. Figaro, also not unrelieved to see Cherubino go, sings gaily of the hazardous military life which now awaits him: 'Say goodbye now to pastime and play, lad' (Non più andrai, farfallone amoroso).

¹ English version by Edward J. Dent (O.U.P.).

ACT II

The Countess, in her boudoir, laments that her husband no longer appears to love her: 'God of love' (*Porgi, amor*). Susanna enters and tells the Countess that the Count has designs on her (*Susanna*), and together they plan to outwit him. Cherubino enters and sings a song to the Countess which expresses his boyish love for her: 'Tell me, fair ladies' (*Voi che sapete*). Susanna and the Countess plan to spite the Count by making an assignation with him in Susanna's name and then sending not Susanna but Cherubino in disguise. For this purpose they start to dress up Cherubino in women's clothes, having prudently locked the door first. But then the Count is heard outside. Cherubino rushes into an inner room and the Countess is in obvious confusion when she lets the Count enter. Meanwhile, Susanna has hidden in an alcove.

His suspicions are aroused, but the Countess insists that in the inner room, which is now locked, is only her maid Susanna. The Count doubts her and says he will go and fetch tools to break the lock of the inner door, and he insists on taking the Countess with him. While Count and Countess are out of the room Susanna dashes out of the alcove in which she has been hiding, unlocks the inner door, and lets out Cherubino, who jumps down out of the window. Susanna then goes into the inner room and locks herself in it.

When the Count and Countess return, therefore, the room looks as if nothing has happened. The Countess, fearing that the Count will find Cherubino in the inner room, confesses to him and asks for pardon. Furious, and with his sword drawn, the Count opens the inner door—and out comes Susanna, to the surprise of the Countess no less than of the Count. Recovering herself, the Countess says that her 'confession' was a ruse to shame the Count and that, of course, it was only Susanna in the inner room all the time. It is the Count's turn now to beg pardon of the Countess.

The intrigue now grows more complex still. Antonio, the gardener, who is also Susanna's uncle, comes in half tipsy and complains that a man jumped down from the window and damaged his plants. Figaro, who has entered, says this was himself and sustains the part with difficulty when Antonio confronts him with the officer's commission which, in reality, Cherubino has dropped. The Count's suspicions are still by no means allayed. Now he welcomes, as allies, Marcellina, Bartolo and Basilio who enter to put forward the case that Figaro is legally obliged to marry Marcellina in compensation for a debt which he is unable to repay. The complication is unresolved as the curtain falls.

ACT III

Susanna, still trying to mislead the Count, promises in a duet to meet him in the garden—though with some confusion between ‘yes’ and ‘no’ which arouses his suspicion. When she goes, the Count again becomes suspicious as he overhears some tell-tale words which she says to Figaro. He vents his anger: ‘Must I forgo my pleasure’ (*Vedrò mentr’io sospiro*).

Now Marcellina, accompanied by Bartolo and the Count’s lawyer, Don Curzio, confronts Figaro with his promise to marry her. Figaro prevaricates, saying he is of noble birth and cannot marry without the consent of his parents. In token of his noble birth he says that not only can he show them the fine garments in which he was found when an infant, but also a curious mark on his right arm. On seeing this mark Marcellina exclaims with excitement that Figaro is her son and, what is more, Bartolo is Figaro’s father.

There follows a sextet of comic reconciliation. Even the Count is reduced to angry inaction. Figaro naturally enough embraces his new-found mother, Marcellina. But when Susanna enters—having raised from the Countess a sum of money to pay the debt and release Figaro from Marcellina’s claim—she misconstrues the embrace, goes straight up to Figaro and boxes him on the ear. Marcellina then takes the lead in explaining the new situation to Susanna, who repeats the words ‘His mother? His father?’ (*Sua madre? suo padre?*) and insists that all should confirm them—which they cheerfully do.

They leave, and the Countess enters. She is still unhappy: ‘I remember the days’ (*Dove sono*). Can she truly regain her husband’s affection? She still hankers to punish him by a false assignation with Susanna in which he will find himself trapped, and instructs Susanna to write a letter to the Count accordingly: in their Letter Duet, Susanna repeats what the Countess dictates.

Now the Count joins the Countess, and two happy couples come to claim the Count’s blessing—not only Figaro and Susanna, but also Marcellina and Bartolo, who have decided to get married. A crowd assembles to witness the ceremony. While a fandango is being danced Susanna slips a little note to the Count—the note which she has written at the Countess’s dictation. Thus, at the very moment of performing the betrothal ceremony, the Count is looking forward to achieving his seduction of Susanna that same evening.

Such is the Countess’s plot, however, that when the Count turns up for his rendezvous with Susanna he will find, not Susanna, and not even Cherubino whom it had originally been planned to send in Susanna’s place, but the Countess herself. Susanna and the Countess will have exchanged cloaks.

ACT IV

In the garden Figaro encounters Barbarina, Susanna's cousin (and Antonio's daughter): the Count entrusted her with the errand of taking back to Susanna—as confirmation of their rendezvous—the pin that sealed her original note; but Barbarina has let it drop and is searching for it. Thus Figaro gathers that Susanna has a rendezvous with the Count, but does not discover that it is to be a faked rendezvous. Furious with his wife—his unfaithful wife, as he thinks—he invites Bartolo and Basilio to come along and witness her shameful meeting with the Count. Alone, he denounces the unfaithfulness of women: 'Yes, fools ye are and will be' (*Aprite un po' quegli occhi*).

As he retires, the Countess and Susanna enter, each disguised as the other. Susanna looks forward to the pleasures of love: 'O come, my heart's delight' (*Deh vieni, non tardar*). She knows that the jealous Figaro is watching her.

Now the complicated rendezvous begins, complicated further still by the fact that Cherubino is there too for a rendezvous with Barbarina. Cherubino sees the Countess, takes her for Susanna and attempts to kiss her. The Count steps in just at that moment and receives the kiss—but the Count's intended box on the ear for Cherubino goes to Figaro, who also intervenes just then. Now the Count starts to make love to Susanna (as he thinks—but really to the Countess, dressed in Susanna's cloak). Figaro thinks he will pay the Count back and starts to disclose the 'plot' to the woman he imagines to be the Countess. It is, of course, Susanna; and when she forgets to disguise her voice Figaro spots who she is, and begins in fun to make love to her—which infuriates her, as she believes that Figaro thinks she is the Countess. Soon she realizes the truth, and they continue for the benefit of the Count, who now sees Figaro apparently making love to the Countess. The Count prepares to denounce them both—but is astonished when the real Countess comes forth and shows that the figure in her cloak is Susanna.

It is the Count's turn once again to be humbled and to apologize to his wife, both for suspecting her and for his own misdemeanours. The Countess forgives him and the company gives itself up to revelry for the rest of the night.

* * *

The Marriage of Figaro, distinguished though it is for famous solo numbers, is also a marvellously conversational opera. The recitative is extensive, quick and complex; in the theatre an inability to grasp it must mean failure to follow the complicated plot. Moreover, at least three of the formal numbers have a conversational element worked with particular musical skill and particular dramatic effectiveness. One is the Letter

Duet, in which Susanna takes down a love letter at the Countess's dictation, and then reads it back. It is a letter making an amorous rendezvous in words that hint obliquely at the real message: 'How delightful 'tis to wander in the breath of evening fair.'

Allegretto
COUNTESS

Voice

Che so - a - ve ze - fi - ret - to,

Orch.

p

SUSANNA

Ze - fi - ret - to. COUNTESS

Que - sta

se - ra spi - re - rà, Que - sta

se - ra spi - re - rà

(Ex. 1)

Later comes the sextet in the third act in which it emerges that Figaro is the son of old Marcellina and of Bartolo, when the phrase 'his mother?', followed by 'his father?' passes from one character to another. And a little extra fun may occur because one of the participants, Don Curzio, the

lawyer, is traditionally a stammerer; so it is 'm-m-mother' and 'f-f-father' when his turn comes.

But perhaps Mozart's greatest skill shows in the long, complicated finales to Acts II and IV, in which the orchestra seems to take its own part in the musical intrigue. In the former, Figaro is confronted by the Count with a paper and is trying with all his wits to identify it: it is (as the Countess whispers to Susanna and Susanna whispers to Figaro) the officer's commission ('la patente del paggio') which Cherubino had dropped. Figaro's racking of his brains is virtually made audible in the repeated phrase of the orchestra (while, amid the talking of the others, Figaro himself is tongue-tied):

Andante ma non troppo

COUNTESS [*p*] O

Voice

COUNT [*mf*] Dun - que?

Orch.

[*p*]

SUSANNA

[*p*] Giu - sti Dei! la pa - ten - tel

ciel! la pa - ten - te del pag - gio!

COUNT Dun - que? co - rag - gio!

FIGARO

O che te - [sta]

(Ex. 2)

In the first part of the finale of Act IV Mozart uses a pointed change of key three times at crucial moments. The first is when the Countess (disguised as Susanna) realizes that the Count may discover her with the importunate Cherubino. The next is the point when Susanna, Figaro and the Count see her with him. Then (most tellingly of all) comes the point

marked *: here the Count steps in and receives the kiss that Cherubino wants to give, 'take this now' (Prendi intanto), to the Countess, whom he takes for Susanna; and Figaro, at 'I want to see' (Vo' veder), steps forward and receives the box on the ear intended by the Count for Cherubino.

SUSANNA O cie - lo! il Con - te!

Andante

Voice

COUNTESS O cie - lo! il Con - te!

CHERUBINO

FIGARO

Pren - di in - tan - to Vo' ve - der co - sa fan

Orch.

p

sfz

*

COUNT Per che voi non ri - pe - te - te,

là.

(Ex. 3)

There is, we may suspect, one special orchestral joke. In Figaro's song about the faithlessness of women, 'Yes, fools you are and will be' (Aprite un po' quegli occhi), the reference to female deception is accompanied by a prominent figure on the horns—alluding to the well-known dramatic convention by which a pair of horns sprouting from a husband's head was a sign that he had been cuckolded. We quote Figaro's words: 'You all of you know!'

FIGARO

Moderato

Voice

già ognu - no lo sa,

Orch.

[*p*] Horns

Strings

Horns

(Ex. 4)

DON GIOVANNI

Il Dissoluto Punito, ossia Il Don Giovanni
(The Rake Punished, or Don Juan)

Libretto by Lorenzo da Ponte

First performed: Prague, 1787

Two Acts

Cast in order of singing:

Leporello, servant to Don Giovanni	<i>bass</i>
Donna Anna, betrothed to Don Ottavio	<i>soprano</i>
Don Giovanni, a licentious young nobleman	<i>baritone</i>
The Commendatore, father of Donna Anna	<i>bass</i>
Don Ottavio, friend of Don Giovanni	<i>tenor</i>
Donna Elvira, a lady of Burgos, deserted by Don Giovanni	<i>soprano</i>
Zerlina, a peasant girl, betrothed to Masetto	<i>soprano</i>
Masetto, a peasant	<i>bass</i>
[The role of Donna Elvira's maid is silent]	

Chorus of peasants and invisible demons

The scene is laid in Seville

The French and Germans call this opera *Don Juan*: and so, rightly, should we, for it provides a ready identification with the legendary hero, celebrated in many other works for the stage before Mozart's. (One was the English play of 1676, *The Libertine*, by Thomas Shadwell, for a revival of which Purcell wrote incidental music; another was an opera by Mozart's contemporary Gazzaniga, whose libretto, by Bertati, was freely drawn upon by Da Ponte in his libretto for Mozart.) However, *Don Giovanni* (Giovanni being simply the Italian form for Juan in Spanish or John in English) has become established in British usage, and the other characters have retained their Italian form too.

Mozart called the opera a *dramma giocoso*, meaning comic opera, neither more nor less. Not that profoundly serious elements are excluded: for in its treatment of moral issues *Don Giovanni* steps beyond the traditional comic-opera framework. But certain scenes and characters are wholly comic and the entire action is presented in a comic context. When the 'great seducer' is eventually dragged down to hell by the statue of the man he killed, the remaining characters come on stage and warn the audience to learn from this to behave themselves! This they do in no solemn tones but in merry, scampering music of an absolutely 'comic-opera' kind.

Don Giovanni is indeed an opera striking in both its dramatic force and

its comic situations, and the characters are so memorably drawn as seemingly to have a life of their own outside the opera: Leporello (one of the great comic creations of musical drama) can be imagined in many other situations from what we know of him here. And the whole action is infused with music showing Mozart's genius at its height.

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ACT I

The action opens outside Donna Anna's house. Don Giovanni is inside, masked and trying to seduce her. (He may perhaps have succeeded: interpretations of the opera vary on this point.) The first voice we hear is that of Leporello, Don Giovanni's servant, who is waiting outside and complaining at the drudgery of his life.

Don Giovanni appears from the house, with Donna Anna holding on to him: she wants to identify her masked attacker. Her old father, referred to as the Commendatore (a title of honour with no special relevance to the action), comes out and insists on fighting Don Giovanni. In the ensuing duel, the Commendatore is killed. As he dies he joins in a trio with Don Giovanni and Leporello.

Don Giovanni and Leporello escape. Donna Anna, attended by her betrothed, Don Ottavio, discovers her father's dead body, and before they leave she makes Don Ottavio swear vengeance on the unknown attacker.

A woman appears, singing about a lover who has deserted her. Don Giovanni decides she needs his 'consolation'—but then, addressing her, sees that she is Donna Elvira of Burgos whom he himself has deserted. He slips away and leaves Leporello to play the cruel trick of forcing Elvira to listen to a list of Don Giovanni's international conquests: 'Pray allow me' (*Madamina, il catalogo*)¹—the Catalogue Song.

The scene changes to a nearby country village. Two peasants, Masetto and Zerlina, are about to be married. Don Giovanni approaches, gives Leporello the task of hustling Masetto away, and has no difficulty in exerting his aristocratic charm on Zerlina: 'You'll lay your hand in mine, dear' (*Là ci darem la mano*). Don Giovanni is on the point of leading Zerlina away when Donna Elvira steps in, sings an aria warning Zerlina, and guides her off.

Donna Anna and Don Ottavio enter; in a quartet, Donna Elvira tells them that Giovanni is a rogue, while he says that she is unbalanced. From Don Giovanni's own voice Donna Anna recognizes the masked attacker of the previous night. She announces her discovery to Don Ottavio: 'You know now for certain' (*Or sai chi l'onore*). Alone, Don Ottavio sings 'Mine be her burden' (*Dalla sua pace*).

Now Don Giovanni, alone, sings of his intention to invite the country-folk to a party (the so-called Champagne Aria). Then he leaves. Masetto

¹ English version by Edward J. Dent (O.U.P.).

returns, offended with his flirtatious Zerlina. But Zerlina twists him round her little finger: 'Beat me, beat me' (*Batti, batti*); and they are reconciled. Don Giovanni enters, but Masetto's wish for vengeance on him is sidetracked when all are invited to the party. Don Ottavio, Donna Anna and Donna Elvira, masked, plan to join the party uninvited and trap Don Giovanni there. The three utter a short but intense prayer: 'May Heaven's eternal justice' (*Protegga il giusto cielo*).

At the party a minuet (for the gentry), a *contre-danse* (for the villagers), and a German waltz (which Leporello insists Masetto shall dance with him) are heard together. Don Giovanni again makes an attempt on Zerlina's not too elusive virtue and, when she screams, drags forward Leporello as the supposed villain. But he is confronted and denounced by Don Ottavio, Donna Anna and Donna Elvira, who have unmasked. With drawn sword he escapes as the curtain falls.

ACT II

For the moment, Don Giovanni's quarry has changed again: now it is a maid of Donna Elvira's. He exchanges cloaks with Leporello for the purpose. After Don Giovanni has played another cruel trick on the passionate Elvira (luring her on to believe he still loves her, and sending her off with the disguised Leporello), he serenades the maid, with a mandolin: 'Look down from out your window' (*Deh vieni alla finestra*).

Masetto arrives with friends to kill Don Giovanni. But Don Giovanni in Leporello's cloak pretends in the darkness to be Leporello; he sends Masetto's friends away and contrives to give Masetto himself a sound beating. Zerlina arrives and consoles Masetto: 'If you will promise me' (*Vedrai carino*).

In turn Zerlina, Masetto, Donna Anna, Don Ottavio and Donna Elvira mistake Leporello for Don Giovanni, whom they are intent on punishing. They discover their error in a sextet; then, with an aria, Leporello manages to escape.

Ottavio sings yet again of his love for Anna: 'Speak for me to my lady' (*Il mio tesoro*); and Donna Elvira yet again voices her sense of betrayal: 'All my love on him I lavished' (*Mi tradì quell'alma ingrata*).

In a cemetery, Don Giovanni and Leporello see a statue of the murdered Commendatore (the erection of statues has never been so quick since). The statue speaks, admonishing Giovanni, to Leporello's (but not his master's) terror. Don Giovanni audaciously invites the statue to supper and the invitation is accepted.

To Don Ottavio, Donna Anna excuses her delay in marrying him: 'Say no more that I am cruel' (*Non mi dir*).

Later, Don Giovanni is dining cheerily at home. His private band is playing and Leporello is waiting on him. (Properly, by the Italian words

sung, Don Giovanni has some female company; in modern productions he dines alone.) Donna Elvira comes in with another entreaty to him; but again it is vain. As she leaves she screams at something she has seen outside. So does Leporello when he goes to look. It is the statue of the Commendatore, approaching to fulfil the invitation to dine with Don Giovanni. It enters, speaks, and drags the still defiant Don Giovanni down to hell as flames arise and an invisible chorus of demons sings.

When the others enter, bent on vengeance, Leporello has to explain that they have been anticipated! Severally, they settle their affairs—Donna Elvira will go to a convent, Donna Anna will observe a year's mourning before marrying Don Ottavio, Zerlina and Masetto will go home to supper, Leporello will seek a new master. All, lightheartedly, tell the audience to learn a serious lesson from Don Giovanni's fate.

* * *

The part of Don Ottavio, the suitor of Donna Anna, is dramatically weak; but through historical accident it includes not one but two of the greatest arias Mozart ever wrote for tenor. For the first production in Prague Mozart wrote the aria 'Speak for me to my lady' (*Il mio tesoro*). When the opera came to be staged in Vienna, in 1788, the leading tenor proved unable to sing this difficult song and an easier one (but not *very* easy!) was given to him: 'Mine be her burden' (*Dalla sua pace*). This, however, was placed by Mozart at a different point in the action. It rather holds up the drama; but, in most productions today, both arias are nevertheless given.

Also for the Vienna performance, Mozart wrote—at the insistence of the singer—a big solo aria for Donna Elvira, 'All my love on him I lavished' (*Mi tradì quell'alma ingrata*). This again holds up the action; but, again, it is usually included. A third insertion demanded of Mozart by his Vienna cast, a rather foolish duet for Zerlina and Leporello, is *not* performed today. Of course, it would be quite reasonable for a modern production to stick entirely to the more concisely dramatic Prague score, at the acknowledged sacrifice of two superb musical items.

The orchestral score includes trombones. The trombone was primarily a church instrument in those days; to import it, therefore, was to bring in a special atmosphere of solemnity,¹ just like the importation of the organ into *Faust* or *The Mastersingers*. The trombones accompany the statue of the murdered man: they are heard only when the statue speaks on the stage—not even when, in the overture, the statue music is anticipated. There is an awesome moment when, in the cemetery, a lively conversation between Don Giovanni and Leporello on the subject of seduction is

¹ See also page 21.

interrupted by the voice of the statue ('Before tomorrow's dawn your laughter's ended'):

Recit. LEPORELLO

DON GIOVANNI
(laughing)

STATUE
Adagio

Voice

[p] Ma se fos - se co - stei sta - ta mia mo - glie? Me - gli o an - co - ra! Di

Orch.

Continuo

Wind
(incl. Trombones)
and Basses

ri - der fi - ni - rai pria dell' au - ro - ra.

(Ex. 1)

There is an even more unusual instrument than the trombone in the score of *Don Giovanni*: the mandolin. Don Giovanni uses it to accompany himself in the serenade to Donna Elvira's maid (a character who never sings a word in the opera, though in the theatre we should see her face). One precedent for the use of the mandolin was in *A Rare Thing* (*Una Cosa Rara*) by Vicente Martín y Soler (1754-1806), a Spanish composer of Italian operas. A song from this opera and also a song from *The Two Litigants* (*I Due Litiganti*) by Giuseppe Sarti (1729-1802) are played by Don Giovanni's private band in the supper scene: they also play 'Say goodbye now to pastime and play, lad' (*Non più andrai*) from *The Marriage of Figaro*, which Leporello greets with the observation: 'I know this tune rather too well!' The gay, easygoing music here is cleverly planned to set off the intensity of the scene which follows.

Mozart's high point of sheer musical skill, however, comes in the ball-room scene, when three small orchestras on the stage play three different tunes in different dance-rhythms which all fit astonishingly together. (In the score there is even provision for the musicians to tune up.)

A notable feature of the opera is the way in which Mozart provides distinctive music to portray the characters of the three women. The simple peasant girl, Zerlina, has essentially simple, tuneful music, like 'Beat me, beat me' (*Batti, batti*), the song in which she wheedles her stupid but honest lover, Masetto:

Andante grazioso
ZERLINA



[p] Bat - ti, bat - ti, o bel Ma - set - to, la tua po - ve - ra Zer -
- li - na: sta - rò qui come a - gnel - li - na le tue bot - te ad a - spet - tar.

(Ex. 2)

Donna Anna's music, especially her Act I aria, 'You know now for certain' (Or sai chi l'onore), shows her rather stiff nobility. In her determination to have revenge, she calls on the services of her accepted lover like a general commanding his troops:

Andante
DONNA ANNA

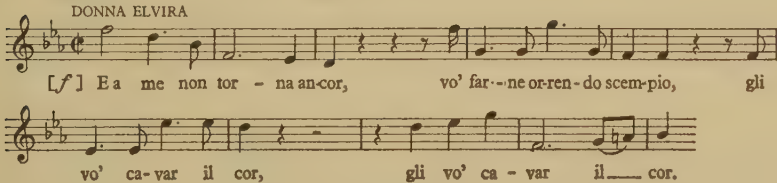


[f] Ven-det-ta ti chieg-go la chie-de il tuo cor — la — chie-de il tuo cor.

(Ex. 3)

The personality of Donna Elvira is more complex. Her temperament is passionate, her situation is tragic, but—in tune with the rather hard attitude of eighteenth-century society to a jilted woman—there is something slightly absurd about her. Mozart conveys this in the old-fashioned pseudo-Handelian idiom of 'Be warned in time' (Ah! fuggi il traditor!), where she warns Zerlina of Don Giovanni, and, most of all, in the almost grotesque leaps in the melody of her opening song 'Where shall I find the traitor?' (Ah, chi mi dice mai?) In this she threatens to slaughter her seducer and tear out his heart!

Allegro
DONNA ELVIRA



[f] Ea me non tor - na an-cor, vo' far -- ne or-ren-do scem-pio, gli
vo' ca-var il cor, gli vo' ca-var il — cor.

(Ex. 4)

COSÌ FAN TUTTE

Così fan tutte, ossia La scuola degli amanti
(All Women do it, or The School for Lovers)

Libretto by Lorenzo da Ponte

First performed: Vienna, 1790

Two Acts

Cast in order of singing:

Ferrando, an officer, in love with Dorabella	<i>tenor</i>
Guglielmo, an officer, in love with Fiordiligi	<i>baritone</i>
Don Alfonso, an elderly philosopher	<i>bass</i>
Fiordiligi } sisters, young ladies of Ferrara	{ <i>soprano</i>
Dorabella }	{ <i>mezzo-soprano</i>
Despina, their maid	<i>soprano</i>

Chorus of soldiers, townspeople, servants and musicians

The scene is laid in a village near Naples

'All women do it': that is, all women show fickleness in love. Such is the idea of the opera. Literally the title is 'Thus do all' (*feminine*). Since the title-words have actually to be sung in the course of the opera, in five syllables with an emphasis on the fourth, an English version might be 'Just like a woman!' The conception throughout is one of artificial comedy. The fickle young ladies do not realize that the two 'new' lovers who come to court them are their old lovers in ridiculous disguise, nor that the 'notary' is similarly their own maid, disguised.

But whereas such disguising in other operas is meant to be dramatically credible, even occasioning tragic consequence, here we are not called on to believe anything. *Così fan tutte* makes fun of the theatre as well as of life. Its appeal is thus of sophisticated comedy with moments of broader humour; Mozart unerringly finds the right musical expression for both.

ACT I

In a café, Ferrando claims that Dorabella will always be faithful to him. Guglielmo makes the same claim for Fiordiligi. But Don Alfonso is an older man and says he knows better. The young men are irritated and, challenged by Don Alfonso, agree to bet on their mistresses' honour against whatever scheme of temptation he may propose. Gaily all anticipate their winnings.

In a garden we discover two girls looking adoringly at miniature pictures of their lovers. Don Alfonso enters (this is the start of his scheme) with a pathetic song of bad tidings: Ferrando and Guglielmo, as officers, have

been ordered away. Now they enter. In a quintet, led off by Guglielmo—'Courage fails me' (*Sento, o Dio*)¹—the four lovers express undying passion, the men breaking off with winks at Don Alfonso. After a little duet for the men, a march is heard. The officers' troops enter, surrounded by townspeople. There are more farewells (in a quintet, with Don Alfonso's laughter in the background) and the officers march off with their men.

The pert Despina, the girls' maid, enters, complaining of her work. She is somewhat incredulous when her mistresses give vent to extreme misery (aria for Dorabella). To their protestations that they cannot live without their lovers, Despina advises them to take love lightly.

Don Alfonso enters; he determines to take Despina into his confidence and gives her some money. He introduces Ferrando and Guglielmo—now comically and extravagantly disguised as a pair of Albanian noblemen who have come to court the girls. Despina allows them to approach her mistresses. In a sextet, during which the girls react indignantly to the intrusion, Don Alfonso sings his part 'aside', unseen by the girls; then he finally enters, 'recognizes' the Albanians as old friends and commends them to the girls. But Fiordiligi, in an aria, says she will be 'Firm as rock' (*Come scoglio*). Ferrando presses his and Guglielmo's claims in an aria, 'O vision so charming' (*Non siate ritrosi*), commending their fine noses and other masculine attractions. The girls leave in an attitude of disdain and the laughing suitors join in a trio with the still confident Don Alfonso.

Alone (and now seriously) Ferrando sings of his continuing love; 'Her eye so alluring' (*Un'aura amorosa*). Alfonso and Despina plan the next stage. Ferrando and Guglielmo enter and pretend, in the presence of the girls and Don Alfonso, to take poison and sink lifeless to the ground. Despina and Don Alfonso hurry away for the doctor. Meanwhile such pathetic devotion begins to have its effect on the girls, on which the 'dead' men (when the girls are not looking) comment amusedly.

Don Alfonso returns with the 'doctor' (Despina, disguised and spouting bogus Latin). Despina produces an outsize magnet, topically referred to as an invention of the celebrated Dr Mesmer, and waves it over the bodies. They 'wake' and demand kisses as a restorative. A long sextet ends the act.

ACT II

Despina further urges her mistresses to try a flirtation. Left alone, the girls decide they will do so after all—Dorabella chooses 'the dark one' (that is, Guglielmo) and Fiordiligi the other—each, in fact, choosing the other's lover!

In a garden Ferrando and Guglielmo have summoned musicians to sing and play for the girls, who enter with Don Alfonso but are bashful—so

¹ English version by the Rev. Marmaduke E. Browne (Novello).

Despina and Don Alfonso, in a quartet with Ferrando and Guglielmo, demonstrate the ritual of courtship for them.

Despina and Don Alfonso leave the four lovers alone. They start talking about the weather at first, then proceeding to other topics. Ferrando leads Fiordiligi away. Guglielmo persuades Dorabella to give him as a keepsake the miniature she wears (it is Ferrando's portrait) and in return gives her a heart-shaped locket: 'This heart that I give you' (Il core vi dono).

They leave, and Ferrando and Fiordiligi enter. He presses his case, but she still does not yield. Left alone she admits fonder feelings for the stranger but resists in the name of her duty to her absent lover. The two men meet: Ferrando reports to Guglielmo this obstinacy of Fiordiligi's—but he has to be told that his Dorabella is weakening, and is shown the portrait with which she parted to Guglielmo. Guglielmo, with Fiordiligi still faithful, can afford to sing lightly of others' inconstancy: 'Ladies have such variations' (Donne mie, la fate a tanti). But Ferrando, alone again, takes the case more seriously. Then Don Alfonso tells Guglielmo and Ferrando that the next stage is about to begin.

In the girls' apartment, Dorabella is cheerful. Fiordiligi decides that they must save their honour and leave the house dressed up in the soldiers' uniforms that their lovers have left. But Ferrando, still in disguise, comes in, renews his wooing—and eventually Fiordiligi yields. Don Alfonso, Ferrando and Guglielmo meet and sum it up: 'Così fan tutte'.

A room is lit for the party which is now to celebrate the approaching marriage of the girls and their 'Albanians'. Despina shows the servants and musicians their duties. Don Alfonso enters and leaves with Despina. The four lovers (now, of course, each man paired off with the other's girl) sing an affectionate quartet with chorus—with some furious 'asides' from Guglielmo. Don Alfonso announces the arrival of the notary (Despina in disguise) with the marriage contract. But just as all are about to sign, the soldiers' chorus (as in Act I) is heard. The 'Albanians' go off to hide themselves and the 'real' Ferrando and Guglielmo enter in their own clothes. They smell a rat—and spot the 'lawyer', who reveals himself to the astonished girls as Despina. The girls tremble as they admit that they were preparing a wedding.

The men surprise *them* by confessing the plot, and all ends happily with Don Alfonso the winner and the girls reunited with their lovers—their *original* lovers, one presumes!

* * *

Da Ponte's words mock the conventions of ever-faithful love. So does Mozart's music. In old-fashioned heroic style, Fiordiligi declares that she will stand 'firm as rock' (Come scoglio):

Andante maestoso

[f] con - tra i ven - ti e la tem - pe - sta, e la tem - pe - - sta

(Ex. 1)

But of course a singer has the same opportunity to display her (or his) voice when a composer means his music ironically as when he means it seriously. This is the particular joy of this particularly sophisticated opera.

Mozart three times makes notable use of recurrent themes. Firstly, the overture (at the end of its slow introduction) presages the tune of the words 'Così fan tutte' itself:

Andante

Vlms., Bsns.

Tutti

Vla., Vc., Cb.

p

f [co - si fan tut - te] *p*

[co - si fan tut - te]

(Ex. 2)

Secondly, when the masquerade is exposed, the two suitors quote music from their and Despina's disguises. The last of these is the nonsense of Dr Mesmer's magnet, previously heard when Despina was dressed as a doctor.

FERRANDO
GUGLIELMO
[Allegretto].

[*mf*]

Ed al ma - gne - ti - co Si - gnor Dot - to - re ren - do l'o -

tr - no - - re Che me - - ri - tò.

(Ex. 3)

Note the exaggerated trill for the waving of the magnet in action. Thirdly, the soldiers' chorus of the first act returns in the last.

The opera is very long, though in only two acts, and certain arias are sometimes cut. The action, be it noted, takes place within a single day—an old dramatic convention which here serves to emphasize the splendid artificiality of the comic tale.

DIE ZAUBERFLÖTE

(The Magic Flute)

Libretto by Emanuel Schikaneder

First performed: Vienna, 1791

Two Acts

Cast in order of singing :

Tamino, a prince	<i>tenor</i>
Three Ladies, in attendance on the Queen of the Night	<i>two sopranos,</i> <i>mezzo-soprano</i>
Papageno, a bird-catcher	<i>baritone</i>
The Queen of the Night	<i>soprano</i>
Monostatos, a Moor, Sarastro's captain of the guard	<i>tenor</i>
Pamina, daughter of the Queen of the Night	<i>soprano</i>
Three Genii	<i>two sopranos, mezzo-soprano (or boys)</i>
The Speaker of the Temple	<i>bass</i>
Sarastro, High Priest of Isis and Osiris	<i>bass</i>
Two Priests of the Temple	<i>tenor, bass</i>
Papagena	<i>soprano</i>
Two men in armour	<i>tenor, bass</i>

Chorus of priests, onlookers, etc.

The scene is laid in ancient Egypt

The Magic Flute is like an English pantomime. That is, it is in the form of a popular entertainment with songs; it allowed a well-known comedian to gag (in this case Schikaneder, the actor-manager-librettist); it is highly moral, with personifications of good and evil on the stage; and in the use of transformations and other theatrical devices it suggests the workings of the supernatural in the middle of a tale about ordinary human beings.

Schikaneder and Mozart were both keen Freemasons at a time when Freemasonry was officially frowned upon in Austria as hostile to the Roman Catholic Church and even to the state itself. In laying the scene in ancient Egypt (where Freemasonry was believed to have its origins), in the rites of purification enacted in the opera in Sarastro's temple, and in some of the actual words of the libretto, Schikaneder and Mozart were obviously alluding to their creed. Moreover, some of the actual music has Masonic significance. And if Sarastro stood for Enlightenment, then the wicked Queen of the Night would seem to represent the Roman Catholic Church, or the Empress Maria Theresa, who upheld the Church and proscribed the Freemasons.

For some reason, the story of *The Magic Flute* had to be altered while it

was being written, a fact which has left some oddities in the plot. The flute itself, presented to the hero by the 'bad' Queen of the Night, aids him in his 'good' quest later. None the less, the plot is still acceptable in the theatre. It is part of the richness of *The Magic Flute* that its music ranges from the 'pop-song' (Papageno's first utterance) to a contrapuntal style suggesting Bach (the duet of the men in armour) and that it can be enjoyed on many levels, from sheer fooling to that which caused Bernard Shaw to say: 'I am highly susceptible to the force of all truly religious music, no matter to what church it belongs; but the music of my own church—for which I may be allowed, like other people, to have a partiality—is to be found in *Die Zauberflöte* and the Ninth Symphony.'

ACT I

Prince Tamino, trying to escape from a huge snake, falls unconscious. The three Ladies-in-Waiting to the Queen of the Night enter, kill the snake, and leave. On recovering consciousness Tamino sees an odd-looking man approaching him: Papageno, the bird-catcher, covered with feathers as his trade demands. He introduces himself by singing a ditty in popular style, and playing his own pan-pipes. Papageno boasts to Tamino that it was he who killed the snake—for which lie he is pushed by the Ladies-in-Waiting (who now re-enter) by having his mouth padlocked.

The Ladies show Tamino the miniature portrait of the Queen of the Night's daughter, Pamina, with whom he at once falls in love: 'O loveliness beyond compare!' (*Dies Bildnis ist bezaubernd schön*).¹ When the Ladies tell him she is a prisoner of Sarastro, whom they represent to be evil, he resolves to rescue her. The Queen of the Night herself appears and urges him on.

The quintet that follows for the three Ladies, Tamino and Papageno, begins 'Hm, hm, hm, hm'—for Papageno, his mouth still padlocked, can only hum and not sing. But now the Ladies take off the padlock, give Tamino a magic flute to help him in his rescue, and give Papageno (who is to accompany and support Tamino) a magic chime of bells. They set off, and are told that three Genii or Boys will show them the way.

The scene changes to a room in Sarastro's palace, where the imprisoned Pamina is importunately wooed by Monostatos, a Moor, Sarastro's captain of the guard. Papageno, who has somehow become separated from Tamino, bursts in—and Papageno and Monostatos have evidently an equally frightening effect on each other. Monostatos runs away. Papageno assures Pamina that she will be rescued soon by one who loves her, and in a duet she assures *him* that he, too, will find love: 'The kindly voice of Mother Nature' (*Bei Männern, welche Liebe fühlen*).

¹ English version by Edward J. Dent (O.U.P.).

Again the scene changes. The three Boys are seen leading Tamino to a temple with three doors. From within the first door a hidden voice bids Tamino 'Stand back' (Zurück!), similarly within the second door. But from the third door emerges the Speaker of the temple, whose utterance awakens in Tamino a desire for wisdom and a suspicion of the Queen of the Night. A hidden chorus assures him that Pamina still lives. Tamino plays his flute and hears an answer from Papageno's pan-pipes. He hastens off in search of Papageno, who, with Pamina, rushes on in search of him—but they are caught by Monostatos. He and his band of slaves are about to arrest them when Papageno, at a touch of his magic bell-chime, stops them in their tracks and makes them dance.

Solemn music heralding Sarastro himself and his attendants is heard. Papageno asks Pamina what they should say to him when accused of attempted flight. 'The truth, friend!' (Die Wahrheit), says Pamina, in a solemn phrase. She confesses to Sarastro, who emphasizes that she is held captive in order to escape her mother's influence: woman's true destiny is to follow a man's guidance. Monostatos, who has now apprehended Tamino, brings him in. After a brief, rapt recognition between Tamino and Pamina, Monostatos tells Sarastro about his vigilance in thwarting an attempted abduction of Pamina and asks for his reward. He gets it—a sentence of beating. All others unite in Sarastro's praise.

ACT II

The priests enter to a solemn march. Sarastro announces that Tamino, before marrying Pamina, must prove himself worthy of admission to the temple. The priests signify their accord on their trumpets. Sarastro prays for Tamino in his coming ordeal: 'O Isis and Osiris'.

Warned by two priests to keep silent and to pay no attention to women, Tamino and Papageno (who is to undergo an ordeal less arduous than Tamino's) find themselves confronted by the three Ladies-in-Waiting but ignore them. The first part of the ordeal is over.

The scene changes to where Pamina is sleeping. Monostatos is excitedly approaching her, when Pamina's mother, the Queen of the Night, appears, and gives her daughter a dagger with the instruction to kill Sarastro. Thus, she says, 'I'll have revenge' (Der Hölle Rache).

The Queen of the Night disappears. Monostatos re-enters, still with designs on Pamina, but Sarastro arrives and dismisses him. Pamina asks Sarastro not to take revenge on her mother. He answers that in his temple 'We know no thought of vengeance' (In diesen heil'gen Hallen).

Tamino and Papageno now await the next stage of their ordeal. Papageno is confronted by an old crone who says she is his sweetheart Papagena (which he treats as a joke). The three Boys appear and bring Tamino his magic flute and Papageno his magic bells again. Pamina arrives and, when

Tamino (as part of his ordeal) refuses to speak to her, gives way to utter grief: 'Ah, 'tis gone for ever' (Ach, ich fühl's).

Sarastro tells Tamino and Pamina to take their last farewell of each other. Papageno sighs for someone to love: ' 'Tis love, they say, love only that makes the world go round' (Ein Mädchen oder Weibchen wünscht Papageno sich)—on which the crone reappears, makes him swear to be true to her, and then reveals herself as young, beautiful and feathered like himself! But a priest prevents him from seizing her—for the present.

In a garden, the three Boys sing symbolically of the dawn. Pamina, distressed at Tamino's apparent desertion, contemplates taking her life, but is restrained by the Boys. Two men in armour, singing a solemn chorale, supervise the last stage of Tamino's initiation—ordeals by fire and water, in which he is joined by Pamina herself. The flute, which Tamino plays, leads them safely through.

Papageno, frustrated, comically contemplates suicide, but finally the Boys prompt him to try his magic bells again. He jingles them and finds his beautiful sweetheart at last. Their comic (yet ecstatic) stammering recognition provides a duet which starts: 'Pa-pa-pa-pa . . . (*forty-eight times*) -geno!'

One more attempt to defeat Sarastro is made by the Queen of the Night, her Ladies and Monostatos, who reappear in darkness with appropriately stormy music. But they are driven away by the light: under Sarastro's benevolent guidance, Beauty and Wisdom shall be crowned for ever.

* * *

Papageno, as a bird-catcher, lures the birds by means of a set of pan-pipes, and Mozart writes a suitably lighthearted part for the instrument.

Andante
PAPAGENO

[*mf*] Weiss mit dem Lock - en um - zu - geh'n, und mich auf's Pfei - fen
zu ver - steh'n! Drum
kann ich froh und lu - stig sein, denn al - le Vo - gel
sind ja mein

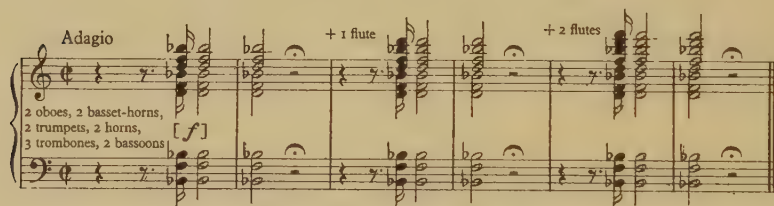
(Ex. 1)

Papageno sings in his first song of how the birds respond to his pipes' call and make him happy. (Ex. 1.)

As equipment to see him through his ritual ordeal, Papageno is given a 'magic' set of bells, and these too enter the opera score: a bell-like instrument with a keyboard is needed (because of the way the music is written), not the usual orchestral glockenspiel played with small hammers held in the hand.

These, and other features of the score, are Mozart's counterpart to fooling. At the other extreme is the solemnity of the music associated with the temple and with Enlightenment—not only with Sarastro but with the Speaker (or Orator, as this priest is sometimes called) of the temple.

This musical solemnity is first of all foreshadowed by the weighty chords at the opening bars of the overture. When the solemn chord-sequence returns in altered form in the *middle* of the overture, in many performances all the chords sound the same. They should not. The top note of the chord properly rises with each set of chords—a musical gesture full of meaning as is seen when the chords are repeated (supposedly played on the priests' trumpets) in the temple at the opening of the second act:



(Ex. 2)

This chord-sequence, by the way, brings in the sound of trombones, instruments whose particular significance has been noted in our consideration of *Don Giovanni*, above.

Another notable musical solemnity arises from the fact that the two Men in Armour, supervising part of the hero's ordeal, sing a Lutheran chorale—'Ah God, from heaven look within' (Ach Gott, von Himmel sieh' darein); Mozart perhaps got the idea from his brief study of some of Bach's works on a visit to Leipzig. The opera audience at Vienna (a Roman Catholic city) might not have recognized it, nor do most modern audiences today; but the peculiarly intense atmosphere of the music—the slow, measured melody sung in octaves by tenor and bass soloists, while contrapuntal phrases are uttered by the orchestra—is unmistakable, unique in this opera and all operas:

Adagio
TWO ARMED MEN

Voices

[P] Der, wel - cher wan - dert die - se Stras - se

Orch.

[P]

voll Be - schwer - den,

(Ex. 3)

The part of the Queen of the Night is famous for its high notes and rapid pace: Josefa Hofer (Mozart's sister-in-law), for whom it was written, must have had a high F (above so-called top C) in her voice.

III

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

(1770-1827)

MOZART'S greatest contemporary, Haydn, also wrote operas—mostly for the noble Esterházy family, to whom he was in service for much of his career. These operas, written in Italian or occasionally German, were formal classical dramas (one on the story of Orpheus and Eurydice) or light comedies such as *The World of the Moon* (*Il Mondo della Luna*), which has recently been revived. But in general Haydn lacked Mozart's sense of the theatre. His stage works were no models for the earnest young German composer who came to Vienna to study with Haydn and then made Vienna his home: Ludwig van Beethoven.

Nor was Beethoven satisfied with Mozart's ideas on opera. 'I could not compose operas like *Don Giovanni* or *The Marriage of Figaro*,' he declared. 'They are repugnant to me. I could not have chosen such subjects. They are too frivolous for me!' The serious moral aspect of *The Magic Flute*, however, was another matter. Beethoven's one opera, *Fidelio*, was likewise an 'ethical' one. But its action, instead of being that of a fairy-tale, concerns real life. In having a rescue as its point of climax it is indebted to Cherubini's *The Water Carrier* (1800; original French title *Les Deux Journées*, *The Two Days*). Luigi Cherubini (1760-1842) was an Italian who lived in Paris from 1788: his *Medea* (1797; originally in French, as *Médée*) has enjoyed modern revivals.

FIDELIO

Fidelio, oder Die eheliche Liebe
(Fidelio, or Married Love)

*Libretto by Josef Sonnleithner after a libretto by J. N. Bouilly;
revision by G. F. Treitschke*

First performed: Vienna, 1805

Final revised version: Vienna, 1814

Two Acts

Cast in order of singing:

Jacquino, porter at the prison	<i>tenor</i>
Marzeline, Rocco's daughter	<i>soprano</i>
Leonore, wife of Florestan, disguised as 'Fidelio', a youth	<i>soprano</i>
Rocco, jailer of the prison	<i>bass</i>
Don Pizarro, governor of the prison	<i>baritone</i>
Florestan, a Spanish nobleman	<i>tenor</i>
Don Fernando, Minister of State	<i>bass</i>

Chorus of soldiers, prisoners and people
The scene is laid in a fortress near Seville

The urge which later led Beethoven to incorporate a setting of part of Schiller's *Ode to Freedom* (camouflaged as an *Ode to Joy*) in the Ninth Symphony also led him to write an opera which is really about freedom. The contrast in *Fidelio* between the darkness of imprisonment—which is taken as unjust political imprisonment—and the light of justice and liberty is both heard in the music and seen on the stage. It is this ethical force in addition to the purely musical strength and beauty of Beethoven's score that gives *Fidelio* its unique appeal among the great operas.

Against the 'blackness' of the villainous governor of the jail, Pizarro, is set the character of the Minister of State: a brief role, but one which must embody in performance the all-important idea of light triumphant. The ethical tone is sustained by the fact that the hero and heroine of the work are already married—a comparative rarity in opera.

The story (of a woman who dresses in male clothes in order to rescue her husband) is said to be a true one, happening within the knowledge of J. N. Bouilly, a Frenchman who cast it originally as an opera libretto for Pierre Gaveaux (1761–1825). Not only Gaveaux made an opera of it but also the composers Simon Mayr (1763–1845) and Ferdinando Paer (1771–1839).

Beethoven called the heroine by the German form 'Leonore'; the name is often changed in English usage to 'Leonora', especially in the concert hall (see below, page 53).

ACT I

In the lodgings of Rocco, the jailer, his daughter Marzeline is being courted by Jacquino, the young porter of the prison. But she does not care for him; her love is for the young man, known as Fidelio, who has been engaged as her father's assistant.

Rocco, her father, enters, and then Fidelio himself. But the 'young man' who has so taken Marzeline's fancy is really a woman in disguise. 'Fidelio' (the word, of course, suggesting *fidelity*) is the name which has

been assumed by Leonore, wife of Florestan. Her aim in entering the prison's service is to find and rescue her husband, whom she suspects is languishing there, unjustly imprisoned. Even at the cost of seeming to accept Marzelline's devotion she cannot reveal her true identity.

Rocco, Marzelline, Leonore and Jacquino (who re-enters) now join in a quartet 'My heart had told me so' (*Mir ist so wunderbar*).¹ Jacquino leaves. Rocco points out in an aria that young people about to marry need money. A trio follows: Marzelline is happy that Fidelio now is her approved suitor, but Leonore thinks only of the rescue.

The scene changes. A military march announces the arrival of Pizarro, governor of the prison: it is he who has unjustly imprisoned Florestan. A message warns him that the Minister of State is coming on an inspection. He decides to have Florestan killed: 'Now is the moment come!' (*Ha! welch' ein Augenblick!*). Bribing Rocco to dig the grave, he resolves to kill Florestan himself.

Leonore has overheard the plot. Alone, she delivers her feelings of loathing for Pizarro and love for her husband: 'Foul murderer!' (*Abscheulicher!*).

Now, on Leonore's intercession, the ordinary prisoners (not Florestan, in solitary confinement) are allowed out of their cells for a brief opportunity to breathe the fresh air. In the Prisoners' Chorus, they utter the word 'freedom'—but guardedly, as they remember that their every word is overheard. Leonore learns that she is to be given an opportunity to help dig the grave intended for a certain special prisoner. Meanwhile Pizarro is enraged that the prisoners have been allowed out, and is calmed only when Rocco remembers that it is the king's name-day and that this therefore is a legitimate celebration.

But now the prisoners are sent back to their cells, their voices joining with the commands of Pizarro to Rocco and the private comments of Marzelline, Leonore and Jacquino.

ACT II

In the deepest dungeon, chained and in darkness, lies one man. It is Florestan. 'God! this awful dark!' (*Gott, welch' Dunkel hier!*) he sings. His aria takes on the quality of hope when he sees, as in a vision, his 'angel, Leonore'. He sinks back and does not hear when Rocco and Leonore arrive to dig the grave in the cell itself. In dialogue interrupted by music we learn that Leonore cannot at first see the prisoner's face. But, having gained Rocco's permission to give the prisoner some food and drink she becomes sure that it is Florestan indeed. Florestan, grateful for her human pity, still cannot recognize her.

Now Pizarro, who has warned a trumpeter to sound the alarm should

¹ English version by Edward J. Dent (O.U.P.).

the Minister be seen approaching, enters and reveals himself to Florestan. He is about to kill Florestan when Leonore throws herself in front of Florestan declaring that Pizarro must first kill Florestan's wife ('Tödt erst sein Weib!'). Her declaration of identity stuns both Pizarro and Florestan. Pizarro would now kill Leonore as well, but she produces a pistol—and suddenly a trumpet-call sounds. The Minister is at the gates. Guards enter. Pizarro and Rocco go to meet him and a duet of joy follows between the reunited Leonore and Florestan.

The scene changes. The Minister recognizes his friend Florestan, sends Pizarro away under arrest, and gives to Leonore the joyous task of unlocking Florestan's chains. Marzelline turns her affections back to Jacquino, and the chorus (now including onlookers as well as prisoners) salute the happy day and the strength of a wife's love.

* * *

The overture begins with a quick, arresting figure, as imperious as an upraised hand. This, the '*Fidelio* overture', is not the overture which Beethoven's first audience heard. They heard the overture which is now sometimes heard at concerts under the name of '*Leonora No. 2*': '*Leonora*' because that is the real name of the heroine of the opera, the title of the original libretto and also the title under which Beethoven himself wanted the opera to be known (the theatre authorities decided otherwise), and '*No. 2*' because Beethoven had already composed and rejected an overture now known as '*Leonora No. 1*'.

At its first performance the opera was a failure. Originally in three acts, it was cut down to two for a performance in 1806: this also was unsatisfactory. But Beethoven wrote for that occasion another overture, now called '*Leonora No. 3*'. (The numbering of these overtures represents the order of their composition. The statement in many books of reference that No. 1 came last is now held to be false.) *Leonora No. 3* is one of Beethoven's masterpieces, more an orchestral expression of the entire opera than a mere introduction to it. So Beethoven must himself have felt, for at the final revision of the opera (1814) he introduced a new and simpler overture. This we call the *Fidelio* overture.

Opera conductors, however, can be as vainglorious as any prima donna. Some of them *will* have their *Leonora No. 3*. In Victorian times in England this overture was sometimes inserted between the two acts. Then Mahler, as conductor at the Vienna Court Opera (1897-1907), established the practice of putting it in the middle of the last act, before the last scene—a practice followed by many other conductors, even today. But this is totally without Beethoven's authority or any valid dramatic pretext.

Other liberties have in recent years been taken with *Fidelio*—the reversal of the order of the opening two numbers (this is in fact a return to the first

version of the opera); the omission of Rocco's song about money; the curtailment of the choral part of the final scene. Such retouching may be considered presumptuous. It is not as if the opera needed it in order to be rescued from oblivion. On the contrary, *Fidelio* has immensely moving theatrical power just as Beethoven finally left it.

A particularly audacious stroke of Beethoven's, and a masterly one, is the quartet in the first act. This is a canon; here are four people expressing

Andante sostenuto
MARZELLINE

Voices LEONORE *p* Mir-ist so wun-der-bar, es engt das
Wie gross ist die Ge-fahr! wie Schwach der Hoff-nung

Orch. *p*

Herz — mir ein, es engt das Herz mir ein, er liebt mich, es — ist
Schein! sie liebt mich, es — ist klar, o

mf *p*

klar, ich wer-de glück-lich, glück-lich sein!
na — men, na — men — lo — se Pein!

(Ex. 1)

their different innermost feelings to the *same* melody in turn. Yet somehow the unity of mood embraces all. The melody is first sung by Marzelline; then—in the following stanza, from which we quote—it is sung by Leonore to new words ('How great the danger is!') while Marzelline puts her original words to a new melody (Ex. 1).

Leonore's great aria in Act I harnesses the 'modernity' of Beethoven's language to an old-fashioned operatic 'scena' in three parts—introductory recitative, slow section, fast section. The slow section—to the words 'Come, hope, . . .' takes the form of a sublime dialogue with three horns and strings:

Adagio
LEONORE

Voice

Horn 2

Horn 3

Horn 1

Orch.

p

[*p*] Komm Hoff-nung, lass den letz-ten Stern, den letz-ten

pp

Stern, der Mü-den nicht er - blei - chen

(Ex. 2)

The opera's great climax occurs when Leonore levels her pistol at Pizarro and suddenly (as she tells him 'One word and you are dead!') the trumpet-call is heard off-stage. The suddenness is emphasized by a dramatic key-change (D major to B flat):

The musical score is for Leonore's aria from Beethoven's opera *Fidelio*. It is divided into two systems. The first system features a vocal line for Leonore and an orchestral accompaniment. The vocal line begins with the tempo marking 'Allegro' and the character name 'LEONORE'. The lyrics are 'noch ein-en Laut und du bist tot'. The orchestral part starts with a forte (*ff*) dynamic. The second system continues the vocal line with the tempo marking 'Un poco sostenuto' and the orchestral part with a piano (*fp*) dynamic. A key change from D major to B-flat major is indicated by the addition of a flat to the key signature in the second system. The vocal line consists of a single melodic line, while the orchestral part includes both treble and bass staves with various instrumental parts.

Allegro
LEONORE

Un poco sostenuto

Voice

noch ein-en Laut und du bist tot

Orch.

ff

fp

(Ex. 3)

CARL MARIA VON WEBER

(1786-1826)

THE peculiar intensity of Beethoven's musical language left its stamp on the musicians who followed. But German opera, so far from following the realistic, ethical (one might say 'political') path of *Fidelio*, turned mainly to the cultivation of the fantastic, the grotesque, the supernatural. This 'romanticism' is a feature of German literature no less than of German music of the period, and both are evident in the art of Carl Maria von Weber. His *Freischütz* remains the only German work between Beethoven and Wagner to have held the international stage.

Weber died prematurely, of tuberculosis, in London, having come for the first performance of his opera *Oberon* (1826). This was commissioned to an English libretto, which now needs thoroughly rewriting if the delightful music is to gain the currency it deserves.

DER FREISCHÜTZ

(The Marksman with Magic Bullets)

Libretto by Johann Friedrich Kind

First performed: Berlin, 1821

Three Acts

Cast in order of singing or speaking:

Max, a young forester, in love with Agathe	tenor
Kilian, a peasant	bass
Cuno, the Head Ranger	bass
Caspar, another young forester	bass
Aennchen, Agathe's cousin	soprano
Agathe, Cuno's daughter	soprano
Ottokar, prince of the region	baritone
The demon Zamiel	speaking part
A hermit	bass

Chorus of villagers, hunters, bridesmaids and spirits
The scene is laid in Bohemia shortly after the end of
the Seven Years War (1756-63)

Der Freischütz is one of the very few opera titles which cannot be more or less straightforwardly translated. Literally it means 'The free-shooter'; a paraphrase might be 'The marksman with magic bullets'. The casting of these magic bullets under the Devil's supervision, and the use thereafter made of them, forms one chief interest in the opera; the other two are romantic love and conventional rustic and hunting jollification. The music unites all three. Spoken dialogue (usually shortened in performance) links the music. The following synopsis makes the omissions which are customary in modern performances.

The score has a richness of melody (both solo and choral) and a warmth of feeling which have kept it alive even in an age which would never endure in a non-musical play such naïve representation of the supernatural.

ACT I

Max, a forester, is derided because, at a shooting contest, he has been beaten by Kilian, a peasant. Cuno, hereditary Head Ranger, is worried too: his daughter Agathe is betrothed to Max. The very next day, Max is due to demonstrate his marksmanship (and thus his right to become Cuno's son-in-law and succeed him eventually) before Prince Ottokar. But on this showing Max is unlikely to acquit himself satisfactorily.

Alone, Max sings of his despair: 'Through the woodlands' (*Durch die Wälder*).¹ During this, unseen by Max, the figure of the demon Zamiel makes a brief appearance. Now Max's fellow-forester, Caspar, after a drinking-song, hands Max a gun and bids him fire at an eagle high above—which falls dead at his feet. Caspar explains that the shot was made with a magic bullet which always hit its mark, and if Max will meet him in the Wolf's Glen at midnight they will cast more such bullets, enabling Max to win tomorrow's contest. Despite the stories of evil attached to the Wolf's Glen, Max consents. Caspar, alone, exults. He has in fact sold himself to Zamiel and now hopes to extend his own respite by substituting Max as Zamiel's victim.

ACT II

In Agathe's room, her cousin Aennchen is hammering in a new nail for a picture that has fallen. Aennchen sings coquettishly, but Agathe is sad. Left alone, she sings of her love and her sense of anxiety: 'May my prayer' (*Leise, leise*); her song becomes more impassioned as she sees her lover approach. Max enters, and Aennchen too returns. But Max soon declares he must leave them and go to the Wolf's Glen, and despite the girls' pleas he sets off.

The scene changes to the Wolf's Glen itself—with an owl, crows, a

¹ English version by Edward J. Dent (O.U.P.).

terrifying woodland landscape, a chorus of invisible spirits and Caspar, who is waiting for Max. At his bidding, Zamiel appears, but leaves before Max arrives. Despite ghostly warnings (one in the form of Max's mother, another in the form of Agathe) Max persists in his resolve. Together he and Caspar cast, by spells, the seven magic bullets, counting them. At each number some evil thing happens on the stage, and at the seventh, in place of a rotting tree, there stands Zamiel himself, reaching out his hand to grasp Max's own. Six bullets will hit as the marksman wishes; the seventh will do Zamiel's work.

ACT III

It is the day of the shooting trial and of the intended wedding. In her room, Agathe, in white bridal dress, is sad. After a song, alone, she tells Aennchen of an ill-omened dream. Aennchen pooh-poohs omens and then makes fun of Agathe by telling her of 'An aunt of mine whom you'll remember' (Einst träumte meiner sel'gen Base)—a tale involving a 'ghost' that turned out to be a dog. Agathe is not amused.

A chorus of bridesmaids arrives and Aennchen brings in a box which should contain a bridal bouquet. When the box is opened, however, there is a shock which cuts the bridesmaids' chorus short: it is a silver funeral wreath. A mistake in delivery, says Aennchen, but Agathe sees another bad omen. The bridesmaids' chorus, somewhat subdued, is resumed.

The scene changes to an open place. Prince Ottokar has been hunting and a chorus celebrates the sport as the huntsmen carouse. Max (who has evidently already made three successful shots) is ordered by the prince to shoot at a white dove visible in a tree. 'Don't shoot, Max! I'm the dove!' (Schiess nicht! ich bin die Taube!) says Agathe's voice; it seems too late, for her body falls and is picked up by a hermit who now appears. But she has only fainted. It is Caspar who has been hit; Zamiel (silent and unseen by anyone else) appears and claims him. Caspar dies.

Max relates the whole story. The prince sentences him to banishment, but the hermit comes forward and bids the prince to be merciful. He relents. Max and Agathe may look forward to being married, and all join in praise to heaven.

* * *

We have seen that Mozart, in several of his operas, quoted in the overture from the music of the opera itself. In *Der Freischütz* the overture is entirely built from melodies found in the opera. Noteworthy are the extra two notes on the trombones which give a sinister afterthought (which only just fails to sound unintentionally comic) to the passionate melody with which Agathe later greets her love to the words 'Heav'n, accept the tears I'm weeping' (Himmel, nimm des Dankes Zähren):

Molto vivace

Ob.

Strs. *p*

Orch.

Trbs. *pp*

(Ex. 1)

But the real sinister element in *Der Freischütz* is in the music to the Wolf's Glen—an unseen chorus, drum rolls, high woodwind shrieks and *tremolo* on the strings. In the theatre it can still seem astonishingly gripping as an accompaniment to the ever-increasing supernatural storm.

Agathe's music is one of the peaks of German romantic expression and Agathe herself stands musically between Leonore in *Fidelio* and Senta in *The Flying Dutchman*. A theme from her passionate first-act aria has been quoted above; her quieter aria in the final act (expressing her belief in God's loving care) is equally characteristic—of herself and of Weber's style:

Adagio
AGATHE

[*mf*] Und ob die Wol - ke sie ver - hül - le Die

Son - ne bleibt am Him - mels - zelt

(Ex. 2)

Highly characteristic of German romantic opera too is the Huntsmen's Chorus. The convivial male choral society was an established German

institution for which a considerable repertory was provided by Schubert, Schumann, Brahms and others, and the opera admirably seizes on its special character:

Molto vivace

Tenors

Basses
(with
horns etc.)

♩ Was gleicht wohl auf Er-den dem Jä - ger-ver - gnü - gen?

The image shows a musical score for a scene from 'Der Freischütz'. It features two staves: a Tenors staff in treble clef and a Basses staff in bass clef. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 2/4. The tempo is marked 'Molto vivace'. The Tenors staff has a melodic line with lyrics: 'Was gleicht wohl auf Er-den dem Jä - ger-ver - gnü - gen?'. The Basses staff provides a harmonic accompaniment. The music is in a major key and has a lively, rhythmic character.

(Ex. 3)

IV

GIOACCHINO ROSSINI

(1792-1868)

STENDHAL, that witty champion of Rossini, wrote that he admittedly had his partiality as a critic but could still be good-natured: 'I have no craving actually to hang anyone, not even Herr Maria Weber, the composer of *Der Freischütz*.' Gioacchino Rossini and Carl Maria von Weber were, indeed, contemporaries—and opposites. Stendhal himself acutely pointed out the difference between the storm music in *Der Freischütz*, which musically conveys the evil atmosphere during the casting of the magic bullets, and the storm music in *The Barber of Seville*, which just represents a storm.

Although *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Don Giovanni* and *Così fan tutte* were written in Italian, the tradition of Italian comic opera which had grown up in the eighteenth century is of a lighter kind than Mozart's. That tradition fully realizes itself in *The Secret Marriage* (*Il Matrimonio Segreto*; 1792) by Domenico Cimarosa (1749-1801). Ten years before *The Secret Marriage*, *The Barber of Seville* had already become operatically famous—not in Rossini's setting but in one by Giovanni Paisiello (1740-1816). Paisiello's version reigned internationally until superseded by Rossini's more vigorous score and has occasionally been revived in our own day.

Rossini worked substantially in three well-defined varieties of opera. First, comic opera, to which belong *The Barber of Seville* and *Cinderella* (both treated below), *The Italian Girl in Algiers* (*L'Italiana in Algeri*) and (in French) *Count Ory* (*Le Comte Ory*); second, old-fashioned Italian 'serious opera', Rossini's most famous example being *Semiramide* ('Semiramide' is the Italian form); thirdly, historical 'grand opera' of a distinctively French, nineteenth-century kind, exemplified in *William Tell* (*Guillaume Tell*; 1829). This work concluded Rossini's operatic activity, though he lived nearly forty years longer.

IL BARBIERE DI SIVIGLIA

(The Barber of Seville)

Libretto by Cesare Sterbini, after Beaumarchais's play

First performed: Rome, 1816

Two Acts

Cast in order of singing :

Fiorello, servant to Almaviva	bass
Count Almaviva, a young nobleman visiting Seville	tenor
Figaro, barber and factotum	baritone
Rosina, a rich ward of Dr. Bartolo	mezzo-soprano
Bartolo, a doctor	bass
Berta, an elderly maid to Dr. Bartolo	soprano
Ambrogio, servant to Dr. Bartolo	bass
Don Basilio, cleric and music teacher	bass
A police officer	baritone
[The part of a notary is silent.]	

Chorus (men only) of soldiers, police and musicians

The scene is laid in Seville

The French dramatist Beaumarchais (1733–99) wrote a cycle of three plays about Figaro. No well-known composer has set the third play as an opera. The first, however, *The Barber of Seville*, is the subject of Rossini's best-known opera; the second, *The Marriage of Figaro*, is the source of Mozart's. Thus Mozart's comes after Rossini's in time of action. The characters' names mostly correspond.

The Barber of Seville has not the serious element of pathos notable in *The Marriage of Figaro*. Its music is the music of wit, coquetry, intrigue and excitement. The sparkle of the young Rosina, the comic nastiness of Basilio with his recipe for a successful slander, and the breezy bounce of the Barber himself ('Figaro here, Figaro there')—Rossini characterizes all these with skill, verve and human insight. The score is always cut in stage performances, and the story as given below follows the action usually performed. The heroine's part was written for a mezzo-soprano; it has been grabbed by countless sopranos (who usually have to alter the notes considerably) but there is now a disposition to restore it to its proper voice.

In the Lesson Scene, prima donnas have sung songs of their own choice, even 'Home, Sweet Home' (composed long after the opera and ludicrously inappropriate to the situation). But Rossini, as a matter of fact, provided his own song for the Lesson Scene: ' 'Gainst a heart aflame with love' (*Contro un cor che accende d'amore*); and it is the new-fangled coloratura of this which Bartolo cries down in favour of good old-fashioned music of which he gives a comic example. This coloratura aria is introduced as coming from a new opera called 'The Useless Precaution'; so, too, is the piece of music which Rosina pretends to drop from the balcony in the opening scene. The subtitle 'or, The Useless Precaution' in fact belongs to *The Barber of Seville* itself.

ACT I

In a street by Bartolo's house a band of musicians is assembling under the direction of Fiorello, Count Almaviva's servant. To their accompaniment Almaviva sings a serenade 'Far in the eastern heaven' (*Ecco ridente in cielo*)¹ underneath Rosina's window in the house. The musicians make a noisy exit. The Count stands aside as Figaro enters: 'I'm the factotum of the town, make way!' (*Largo al factotum della città*). He and Almaviva recognize each other and Figaro, having the position of visiting barber-factotum in Bartolo's house, agrees to help further Almaviva's plans.

Rosina, who appears on her balcony with Bartolo, drops a note into the street and asks Bartolo to go and retrieve it, saying it is the music of a song which she let fall by accident. Almaviva (for whom it was really intended) picks it up: in it Rosina asks to know his name. In a song (accompanied, properly, by himself on the guitar) he tells her it is Lindoro. (He does not wish to divulge his true rank.)

Stimulated by money from Almaviva, Figaro has the idea of introducing him into Bartolo's house as a drunken soldier demanding a billet. Figaro leaves Almaviva with a pattering description of how to find his shop 'with five wigs in the window'.

The scene changes to a room within Bartolo's house. In 'Once a song at break of day' (*Una voce poco fa*), Rosina shows her mettle: she can appear docile on the surface but will get her way. When she leaves, Bartolo tells Don Basilio—a cleric and scandalmonger as well as a music-master—that he has heard that Count Almaviva is in town and is pursuing her. Basilio advises spreading a scandal about him—and in his aria 'Slander's whisper' (*La calunnia*) shows how a little rumour may grow and grow until it explodes like a thunderclap.

Figaro tells Rosina that 'Lindoro' is deeply in love with her and asks her to write a note to him. But she, the cunning creature, has prepared one already! Bartolo re-enters and warns Rosina not to try to deceive him. Then arrives the 'drunken soldier' (Almaviva in disguise), who cannot even pronounce Bartolo's name rightly. Rosina sees the game at once. Eventually Bartolo produces a document exempting him from billeting, but the 'soldier' brushes it aside and the comic disorder (now involving Basilio and Figaro too) increases.

Suddenly there is a knock. It is the police: they have come to investigate the noise. All except Almaviva try to catch the officer's ear simultaneously. The officer arrests Almaviva but, when Almaviva secretly identifies himself to him, releases and salutes him, to everyone's stupefaction. All in turn (Rosina first) join in an ensemble—'I don't know what to think' (*Fredda ed immobile*)—in which the excitement gradually mounts.

¹ English version by Edward J. Dent (O.U.P.).

ACT II

An unknown music-master enters the house and greets the surprised Dr. Bartolo. Like Basilio, he is a cleric, and endlessly repeats his blessing: 'Peace and gladness on this dwelling' (Pace e gioia sia con voi). He declares that he is deputizing for Don Basilio, who is sick. It is Almaviva, in another disguise. To convince Bartolo he gives him the letter he had from Rosina, as if he had received it from someone else by means of intrigue. Rosina sings a song (this is the Lesson Scene) which enables her to come amorously near the 'teacher'. Bartolo comically demonstrates what *his* idea of good music is. Figaro enters, with an appointment to shave Bartolo.

Basilio enters. All are disconcerted, but the lovers and Figaro tell him he really *is* ill. A purse slipped to him by Almaviva gives a firm hint to him and he goes, with endless repetition of 'So good-night, then!' (Buona sera!). Bartolo is shaved. The lovers, aided by Figaro, plan to elope at midnight.

Berta, the elderly maidservant, alone, sings pointedly about her employer wanting to marry his ward: 'Spite of sixty years to carry' (Il vecchiotto cerca moglie).

Bartolo confronts Rosina with her letter and insinuates that Figaro and the false 'music-master' are conspiring to deliver her to another man—namely, Count Almaviva. The angry Rosina (not realizing that Almaviva and Lindoro are the same) discloses the plan for elopement and agrees to marry Bartolo.

The stage empties. There is a storm outside as Figaro and Almaviva enter. They explain matters to Rosina and disclose that Lindoro is in fact Almaviva himself. A notary, procured by Bartolo for his own marriage to Rosina, unites Rosina and Almaviva, with Basilio (at pistol-point) and Figaro as witnesses. Bartolo, entering with an officer and soldiers, orders the arrest of the miscreants—but then, learning what has happened, realizes he is too late and accepts the situation. A gay ensemble ends the opera.

* * *

Rossini makes *The Barber of Seville* a real play-in-music, with a constantly developing plot, and at the same time he provides real display-pieces for the singers. The barber's own self-introducing aria, with its rapid patter of 'Figaro here, Figaro there' is too well known to need quotation. Equally appropriate to situation and personality is Don Basilio's Slander Song (with its musical illustration of how malicious rumour explodes on the victim's head 'like a cannon-shot').

When Rosina reveals herself to us at the beginning of the second scene, the elaborated repetition of one of her phrases becomes a musical demonstration of the cunning coquetry by which she will twist her guardian round her little finger. She declares she will lay 'a hundred traps' for him:

Allegro moderato
ROSINA

[p] e cen-to trap-po-le Pri-ma di ce-de-re fa-rò gio-car, — fa-rò gio-car, e cen-to trap-po-le Pri-ma di ce-de-re, e cen-to trap-po-le fa-rò fa-rò gio-car.

(Ex. 1)

Rossini was thought in his day to be a very noisy composer. The 'Rossini *crescendo*'—a very long, gradual *crescendo* extending over a whole ensemble with repeated sections—is indeed characteristic of him, though he did not invent it. But it is a real dramatic device, and never better used than in the finale of Act I of *The Barber of Seville*, when it indicates a growing atmosphere of confusion and accusation. Shortly before this, with similar skill, Rossini uses the pace and style of a patter-song not for one soloist but for six people addressing the officer of police simultaneously. It is often complained that in operatic ensembles one cannot hear different sets of words because they are all uttered together: this is exactly what happens here, but this time it is on purpose! The audience's reaction exactly corresponds to that of the bewildered officer. The repeated 'Si, signor' is tossed comically from one character to another in a section which begins with Bartolo's complaint at having been molested by 'this pest of a soldier':

Vivace
BARTOLO

Voice [p] Que-sta be-stia di sol-da-to, Mio Si-gnor, m'ha mal-trat -

Orch. [p]

First system of musical notation. The vocal line (bass clef) has the lyrics: - ta - to, Si Si - gnor, si Si - gnor, si Si - gnor m'ha mal - trat - . The piano accompaniment consists of a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) with chords and eighth notes.

Second system of musical notation. The vocal line (bass clef) has the lyrics: - ta - to, Que - sta be - stia di sol - da - to. Below this, the character FIGARO is introduced with the lyrics: Io qui ven - ni, mio Si - gno - re. The piano accompaniment continues with chords and eighth notes.

(Ex. 2)

The overture, by the way, was originally used by Rossini in an earlier opera altogether: so was the Count's serenade in Act I.

LA CENERENTOLA

(Cinderella)

Libretto by Jacopo Ferretti

First performed: Rome, 1817

Two Acts

Cast in order of singing:

Clorinda } daughters of Don Magnifico and half-sisters	{	soprano
Tisbe } to Cinderella	{	mezzo-soprano
Angelina (known as Cenerentola, i.e. Cinderella),		
step-daughter to Don Magnifico		mezzo-soprano
Alidoro, tutor to Prince Ramiro		bass
Don Magnifico, an impoverished nobleman		bass
Ramiro, Prince of Salerno		tenor
Dandini, the Prince's valet		baritone

Chorus of ladies, gentlemen and servants of the prince's court

The scene is laid in Don Magnifico's home and a nearby palace

Pathos and comedy, coloratura fireworks and witty patter are all in this operatic *Cinderella*, which the heroine concludes with one of Rossini's

most celebrated vocal show-pieces. It is no wonder that this opera has had a prominent place in the post-war theatrical revival of Rossini's work.

But the opera was heard in London as early as 1820, well before the pantomime version; indeed it seems to have contributed to the shaping of the pantomime. Yet so familiar is the latter that English-speaking audiences have now to be warned of the 'oddity' of the opera—namely, that there is no element of magic in its plot. Instead of a fairy godmother there is a plotting tutor, Alidoro, who pulls the strings and attends matter-of-factly to the details of Cinderella's going to the ball. Incidentally, Alidoro, after casting off his disguise as a beggar, is revealed 'in philosopher's clothing', according to the libretto. Anyone wishing to know the proper clothing for a philosopher has, therefore, only to see the opera.

To the baron, Cinderella's step-father, Rossini gave two big comic arias. In modern English productions he has been allotted only the first of these, but it has been put in the place occupied by the second (that is, the opening of Act II). In the following synopsis this rearrangement is observed and so are some cuts which are usually made; but Alidoro's aria is included—for, although sometimes cut, it might well not be. The part of the heroine, it will be noted, is for a mezzo-soprano, as in *The Barber of Seville* (and also *The Italian Girl in Algiers*). Her half-sisters are vain and silly; but they are not grotesque and are not called 'the Ugly Sisters'.

ACT I

While her half-sisters, Clorinda and Tisbe, are preening themselves, Cinderella is doing household tasks and singing her pathetic little song 'Long ago there lived a king' (*Una volta c'era un rè*).¹ The entry of Alidoro, disguised as a beggar, shows up Cinderella's kindness and her half-sisters' lack of feeling. A group of courtiers enters with the announcement that Prince Ramiro will soon be here to bid Don Magnifico's daughters to a ball, where he will choose the fairest woman as his bride. Clorinda and Tisbe redouble their efforts to look attractive, each calling on Cinderella to bring her this and that.

The noise brings in Don Magnifico, angry at being wakened out of a dream. He tells it to Clorinda and Tisbe; though the dream involves his being turned into an ass he is sure it means that his daughters are to marry princes. Gleeefully he anticipates dandling his royal grandchildren. Naturally, the news of the coming ball only strengthens his feeling.

Alidoro has persuaded Prince Ramiro to change identities with his valet, Dandini, and has advised him that a daughter of the baron will be the best bride for him. He arrives on a reconnaissance and is beguiled by the charms of the nervous girl who appears, and whom he takes to be a serving-maid: Cinderella. Her tender feelings are aroused too, and there follows a duet,

¹ English version by Arthur Jacobs.

'O so ardently I gaze' (Un soave non so che). Don Magnifico re-enters fussily. Clorinda and Tisbe are still dressing themselves up when Dandini (masquerading as the prince himself) arrives, escorted by courtiers.

Dandini sings an affected song in stilted language and flowing musical phrases. He puts on a ridiculous 'grand manner' which mightily impresses Clorinda and Tisbe (who now enter) and their father. He extends 'his' invitation to the ball. Cinderella begs Don Magnifico to take her to the ball too—'for just a half-hour, even for a quarter!'—but he rudely repulses her, and tries to justify himself to Dandini and Ramiro who have overheard.

Alidoro returns, this time as an official with a census-register, demanding to know where Don Magnifico's 'third daughter' is. Confused, Don Magnifico alleges that she died. There is a moment of doubt: in a quintet, each entering in turn, all present voice their suspicions of what is going on: 'It's plain enough to see' (Nel volto estatico).

When all the others leave, Alidoro surprises Cinderella by telling her she will go to the ball, and he will take her. She can hardly believe him—is this just a play they are supposed to be acting? 'Yes, my daughter—all the world's a stage.' Alidoro's aria, which follows, is devoted to this theme.

The scene changes to Prince Ramiro's palace, where Dandini (still disguised as the prince) tells Don Magnifico that he will recognize his knowledge of wines by promoting him steward of his household. Then he pretends in his grand manner to make love simultaneously to Clorinda and Tisbe, who have become jealous rivals of each other. But, left alone with Ramiro, Dandini tells him that he has found out both are boobies: 'Tell me quickly in a whisper' (Zitto, zitto, piano, piano).

Again confronted with Clorinda and Tisbe, Dandini says he will marry one of them and give the other to his squire (pointing to the real prince). Both girls recoil in horror while Dandini and Ramiro enjoy the joke.

Alidoro enters with the announcement that a strange lady, veiled, has arrived. Clorinda and Tisbe feel agitated. The strange lady (Cinderella, of course) sings: 'All is not gold that glitters' (*Sprezzo quei don che versa*). Dandini is delighted; Ramiro strangely moved. She unveils. Her beauty—and to Clorinda and Tisbe, her resemblance to Cinderella—are an astonishment.

Don Magnifico, who has been in the cellar, re-enters and does not know what to believe. All express doubt, confusion and excitement in a big ensemble.

ACT II

Enjoying the freedom of the princely cellar, the Baron (with chorus of courtiers) dictates a proclamation against the diluting of wine.

Dandini has himself fallen in love with Cinderella but she tells him she

loves his squire. The 'squire' (that is, the real Prince Ramiro) overhears this and claims her. But she gives him a bracelet and then, telling him he must find its companion and so discover who she is, she leaves. Resuming his true identity, the prince summons his courtiers and declares he will go in search of her.

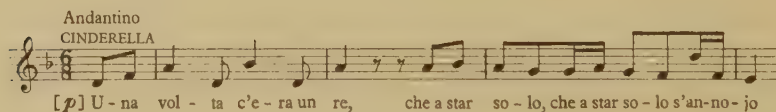
Dandini, piqued at having to resume his station, is interrupted by the baron, whom he leads further by the nose before revealing at last that he is not the prince but only a valet. The baron is furious.

Back in the baron's house, Cinderella is in her shabby clothes once more when her father and half-sisters return from the ball. A storm rages, and Alidoro contrives that the prince's coach shall break down outside the house and he shall ask for shelter. He does so, and recognizes Cinderella, who learns that her squire is really the prince. A big sextet of confusion follows—'Here's a plot, there's no denying' (*Questo è un nodo avvilupato*). Ramiro flings back in the faces of Clorinda and Tisbe their expressions of horror at the idea of marrying him (in Act I, when they thought him a courtier), and after another sextet of confusion he leaves with Cinderella. Clorinda and Tisbe face the problem of begging for pardon.

Back in the palace Cinderella, richly dressed, is welcomed as a princess. She forgives her stepfather and his daughters and sings of her transformation: 'Born to a life that was lonely' (*Nacqui all'affano, al pianto*). Then in exultant style, supported by all present, she brings the story to an end: 'Now no longer by the cinders' (*Non più mesta accanto al fuoco*).

* * *

The transformation from the household drudge to the princess is expressed in the distance from Cinderella's pathetic little opening air to the brilliant, joyous runs of her final one—that is, from her ditty 'Long ago there lived a king':



(Ex. 1)

to the ecstasy when she dismisses her long suffering as only a vanished nightmare—the latter using the entire range of the voice (Ex. 2).

The ensembles, steadily building up in volume and tension, and allowing one character at a time to break out into individually passionate expression, are a notable feature of the score. So is the use of the orchestra to add to the gaiety. In the dazzling patter-duet for Ramiro and Dandini, 'Tell me quickly in a whisper', it is the violins that keep the rhythm and

Allegro
CINDERELLA

[*f*] Ah fu un lam - - - po un so-gno, un

Voices
CLORINDA
THISBE
p Tut-to can - gia a po - co a po - co, ces - sa al -
DANDINI, MAGNIFICO

Orch.
p

giuo - - - co,

- fin di so - spi - rar,

(Ex. 2)

melody dancing along in short notes when the voice has an emphatic long one:

Vivace
RAMIRO *p*

Voice
p Pia-no, pia-no, pia-no, pia - - no, pia-no, pia-no, pia-no,

Orch.
p

pia - - - no

(Ex. 3)

GAETANO DONIZETTI

(1797-1848)

AMONG Rossini's lesser-known operas is one called *The Lady of the Lake* (La Donna del lago), after Sir Walter Scott's poem. Scott's works inspired various other composers of the period (Byron is his only competitor among British authors after Shakespeare) and it is not surprising that Gaetano Donizetti's sixty-two operas include a now forgotten *Kenilworth Castle* (after Scott's *Kenilworth*) and the celebrated *Lucia di Lammermoor* (after *The Bride of Lammermoor*).

Donizetti's audiences went to see the *latest* opera as modern theatre-goers seek the latest play. These audiences loved the sheer thrill of technically difficult singing, but reports of the time show that they were also emotionally moved by the characterization as conveyed in the voices. To a later generation, for whom Verdi's late works were still fresh and Puccini's were newly arrived, it was difficult to consider Donizetti's (or Bellini's) pretty warblings as adequate to the extremely dramatic scenes (of madness, betrayal, violence and so forth) which they had to represent at points of climax. Now that Verdi's and Puccini's conventions belong, with Donizetti's, to history, modern audiences have been reattracted to Donizetti's serious works, especially when singers are available who can do justice to them. Donizetti's output also includes comic operas, for which he had a lively aptitude.

He followed the Italian tradition of using recitative (not speech), setting in relief the arias and ensembles. The climax of dramatic complexity is musically represented (again in a traditional way) by a big ensemble for all the characters at the end of the penultimate act. Besides *Lucia di Lammermoor*, his operas include *Don Pasquale* (1843), still an oft-performed comic opera, and *The Daughter of the Regiment* (1840; one of his several operas in French).

L'ELISIR D'AMORE

(The Elixir of Love)

Libretto by Felice Romani

First performed: Milan, 1832

Two Acts

Cast in order of singing :

Giannetta, a country girl	<i>soprano</i>
Nemorino, a young farm-labourer	<i>tenor</i>
Adina, a rich young proprietress of a farm	<i>soprano</i>
Belcore, a sergeant	<i>baritone</i>
Dulcamara, a quack doctor	<i>bass</i>

Chorus of villagers and soldiers
The scene is laid in a Basque village

The 'elixir of love' is a bottle of wine which a quack doctor sells to a credulous country villager. From this we might expect uproarious comedy throughout. But this villager—who remains credulous, almost a simpleton—is the hero of the opera and moreover has a famous song which is genuinely (not mockingly) pathetic in appeal.

This balance between comedy and pathos is the distinguishing feature of the opera and shows a finely artistic judgment first of all from Felice Romani, the librettist. (He wrote not only this and other texts for Donizetti, but also those of the two Bellini operas treated in this book, and some for Rossini too; no hack-writer, he enjoys an honourable position in Italian literature.) An equally judged balance between comic and serious elements was shown by Donizetti himself. The sophisticated city opera-goers are allowed to laugh at the naïveties of country-life—but not to laugh too hard.

The whole subject of the elixir is raised because the heroine, Adina, has been reading the story of Tristan and Isolde ('Tristano' and 'Isotta' in the Italian). In Adina's book Tristan used a love-potion to win Isolde. Wagner saw the matter differently.

ACT I

The rich, beautiful Adina mocks at the bashful attempts of Nemorino to woo her and prefers to read aloud from her book about Tristan and Isolde. The villagers wish they had an elixir of love such as Tristan secured. Belcore, a sergeant at the head of a detachment, comes in and courts Adina, to Nemorino's despair.

A trumpet off-stage heralds the entrance of a gilded cart. In it stands Dr. Dulcamara, a quack eloquently proclaiming his wares: 'Attention, you country-folk' (Udite, udite, o rustici).¹ The crowd is impressed. When Nemorino asks for 'the elixir that won Queen Isolde' Dulcamara says he has it. He hands Nemorino a bottle really containing Bordeaux wine, and

¹ English version by Arthur Jacobs (O.U.P.).

declares that he has never seen such a simpleton. They have a comic duet: 'Thank you kindly' (*Obbligato*).

Nemorino settles down to eat and drink. Happy that he will shortly win Adina by magic (the elixir is supposed to work after twenty-four hours) he sings to himself and does not bother Adina when she re-enters. Of course, this is just what stirs her interest in him.

Belcore receives a message that he and his detachment must leave. He asks Adina to marry him that very day, and she—to stimulate and pique Nemorino—appears to consent. Nemorino now becomes despairing again (after the elixir's twenty-four hours it will be too late!). He entreats Adina to postpone the wedding by a day; she refuses, and while all others look forward in lively manner to the wedding celebrations, Nemorino feels hopeless.

ACT II

On Adina's farm the wedding feast has been prepared. After a merry chorus Dulcamara produces the latest piece of music, a 'barcarolle' from Venice about a beautiful poor girl who rejects the advances of a rich old senator. Dulcamara and Adina sing it, to the applause of the guests: 'I have riches, you have beauty' (*Io son ricco, e tu sei bella*).

The crowd departs to watch the signing of the marriage contract, leaving Dulcamara to finish the food. Nemorino, who has been missing, comes in. Dulcamara offers him another bottle of 'elixir', to take instant effect this time. The sly Adina has postponed, after all, the signing of the contract, and Belcore re-enters. To gain money to pay for the new bottle, Nemorino enlists in Belcore's regiment, singing with him a duet, 'Twenty florins' (*Venti scudi*).

Back in the village square, Giannetta tells the villagers a secret: Nemorino's uncle has died leaving him (though he does not know it) a rich man. The girls now pay Nemorino considerable attention—which he ascribes to the elixir! Adina is touched when she learns that he has enlisted for her sake. Nemorino, delighted with his new popularity among the girls, leaves with the others. Adina learns from Dulcamara that he has sold Nemorino an 'elixir'—but she says (and Dulcamara agrees!) that as a beautiful woman she owns a powerful elixir of her own.

Nemorino re-enters; he has observed a change in Adina's attitude towards him, and once again his love for her emerges: 'Did not a tear unwillingly' (*Una furtiva lagrima*). Adina returns. She has bought Nemorino's discharge from the army, and hands him the papers. She declares her love for him, and she and Nemorino are united at last.

Belcore, returning with his soldiers, finds himself thrown over but consoles himself with the thought that the world is full of girls. Dulcamara does a brisk trade among the villagers with his evidently successful elixir—

it brings not only love but money. The happy villagers give their enthusiastic thanks to Dulcamara as he leaves in his cart and the opera ends.

* * *

It is richness and range of melody, not of harmonic language or structural subtlety, that carries *The Elixir of Love*. Sullivan must have learned a trick or two for his operettas from the duet 'I have riches, you have beauty' of which we may quote not the beginning but a catchy later fragment. Adina is here singing in the character of a humble Venetian girl and modestly rejects the honour of a Senator's love; notice the way the music exposes the clever internal rhyme (*onore, Senatore, amore*):

Andantino
ADINA

[p] Qual o - no - re un Se - na - to - re me d'a - mo - re sup - pli -
car! Ma mo - des - ta gon - do - lier - a un par mio mi vuo spo - sar.

(Ex. 1)

Nemorino's famous pathetic song, 'Did not a tear unwillingly' (*Una furtiva lagrima*), has an introduction surprisingly, and most effectively, using a solo bassoon. Later in the song, after expressing a wish to mingle his sighs with those of his beloved, Nemorino has a long note which breaks out into the word 'Heaven!' (*cielo*). At this very point the music breaks out from the minor to the major key, with touching effect:

Larghetto
NEMORINO

p i miei so-spir con - fon - de-re per po-co a su-oi so -
- spir i pal - pi - ti, i pal - pi - ti sen - tir con -
cresc. fon - de-re i mi-ei co'suoi so - spir. Cie - lo si può mo - rir

(Ex. 2)

LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR

(Lucy of Lammermoor)

Libretto by Salvatore Cammarano, after the novel by Sir Walter Scott

First performed: Naples, 1835

Three Acts

Cast in order of singing:

Norman, an officer of Henry Ashton's household	<i>tenor</i>
Henry Ashton, lord of the castle of Lammermoor	<i>baritone</i>
Bide-the-Bent, chaplain at Lammermoor	<i>bass</i>
Lucy Ashton, Henry's sister	<i>soprano</i>
Ailsie, her companion	<i>mezzo-soprano</i>
Edgar, Master of Ravenswood, in love with Lucy	<i>tenor</i>
Arthur Bucklaw	<i>tenor</i>

Chorus of friends, relations and retainers
of the house of Lammermoor

The scene is laid in Scotland towards the end of the seventeenth century

Emilia di Liverpool, the title of one of Donizetti's operas, must have sounded excitingly exotic to his Italian audiences: and *Lucia di Lammermoor*, in like manner, took these audiences to the life of a strange people living in feudal conflict in almost barbaric surroundings. Sir Walter Scott's novel was raided for a libretto by Cammarano (who later wrote *Il Trovatore* and three other librettos for Verdi).

The names of characters are Italianized in Italian performances as Enrico, Lucia, etc. Scott's 'Bide-the-Bent' seems to have defeated translation and is made into 'Raimondo'. In our synopsis we return to the literary originals of the names; but the whole libretto of the opera is very free (or careless) with the original. Cammarano made Bucklaw and Henry both 'Lords' but they are not so in the original—nor does the form 'Lord Henry Ashton' make proper sense here. Nor, in the original, is there a 'Castle of Lammermoor': Lammermoor is only the region of Scotland in which the action takes place. Incidentally, in the novel Lucy does not murder her husband—she attempts to, but he recovers.

Musically there are two high points—the sextet (with chorus) in Act II, which is the opera's climax of dramatic complexity, and the Mad Scene in Act III, the point of greatest self-expression for the heroine. The opera very much 'belongs' to the heroine, and it is as a vehicle for the dramatic intensity and vocal suppleness of a Maria Callas or a Joan Sutherland that it continues to be revived.

A scene of confrontation between Henry and Edgar at the beginning of Act III is omitted from most performances and from the ensuing synopsis.

ACT I

Henry Ashton, in conversation with his follower Norman, is agitated because his sister, Lucy, refuses the marriage with Arthur Bucklaw which has been arranged for her and which would strengthen Henry's house. Henry has found that Lucy has secretly been meeting her lover, Edgar, whose inheritance Henry has usurped. A hunting-party returns with the news that Edgar is in the neighbourhood. Henry expresses his hatred for Edgar: 'Cruel, fatal rage' (*Cruda, funesta smania*).

In a park by a fountain, Lucy is awaiting her love—with Ailsie, her companion, to keep watch. Lucy tells how she saw a spectre rising from the fountain: 'When all was silent' (*Regnava nel silenzio*); then she passes to rapturous anticipation of Edgar's coming: 'When in his joy and rapture' (*Quando, rapito in estasi*). Edgar arrives—but with the news that he must go at once to France, and they bid one another a loving farewell.

ACT II

Norman, conspiring with Henry, has intercepted the letters written by Edgar to Lucy and has written a forged one to the effect that Edgar is marrying someone else. In a duet, Henry gives the forged letter to Lucy. Festive music announces the arrival of Arthur Bucklaw, whom Henry intends Lucy to marry. Even in her grief over Edgar's 'unfaithfulness' she is still unwilling. The chaplain, Bide-the-Bent, to whom she turns for advice, tells her to resign herself to the marriage.

In a decked-out hall the company welcomes Arthur Bucklaw: 'We all rejoice to see you here' (*Per te d'immenso giubilo*). Lucy, trembling and in misery, is induced to sign the marriage contract. Suddenly there is a commotion; Edgar has returned and confronts them all, and a sextet follows: 'What restrains me?' (*Chi mi frena?*). Bide-the-Bent stops Henry's men from attacking Edgar and himself shows Edgar the marriage contract which Lucy has signed. Edgar curses Lucy for her lack of trust and a further ensemble expresses the passionate feelings of all.

ACT III

The company is celebrating the marriage when Bide-the-Bent interrupts the revelry with awful news: Lucy has gone mad and killed her husband. Lucy herself, her wedding garment stained with blood, enters. In this, her Mad Scene, she imagines that she and Edgar are beside the fountain but that a spectre rises up between them; she imagines the marriage that was to have taken place between them: 'Now, now I am yours' (*Alfin son*

tua). Finally she prays Edgar to shed a tear on her grave. She falls senseless.

By night, Edgar has come to the graveyard outside the castle. He prepares to die in a duel with Henry, thinking that Lucy has married Arthur Bucklaw and is happy with him. The chorus enters to tell him she is dying; the castle bell tolls; Bide-the-Bent enters to announce that she is dead. Edgar is now overcome with grief and kills himself, thinking of her as he dies: 'Thou who heavenward art flying' (Tu che a Dio spiegasti l'ali).



The sextet in Act II is remarkable for its building-up of tension. It is begun by Edgar and Henry (as the chief opponents) alone, afterwards joined by Lucy and then by Arthur Bucklaw, Bide-the-Bent and Ailsie, with the bystanders in chorus. Edgar, Henry and Lucy each have their moments of dominating the sextet. Here is one of Lucy's, as she sings 'Ah, I should like to weep and cannot; tears still desert me':

Larghetto

Ah vor-rei pian - ge - re e non pos - - -

LUCY
AILSIE

[*f*] vi - ta chi per lei non è com -

Ah! son vin - to, son com - mos - so,

EDGAR
ARTHUR

[*mf*] den - so ve - lo di spa-ven - to par - che co - pra i

vi - ta ah che spe - gne-re non

HENRY
BIDE-THE-BENT

[*Com*] mos - so ha di ti - gre in

Chorus

[*inari-*] di - ta el - la sta fra mor - te e

el - la sta fra mor - te e

Orch.

mf *cresc.*

so m'abbando - na il pianto an - cor!

~ mos so *fp* ha di tigre in petto il cor. Co [me]
 r'a - mo, in - gra - ta, r'a - mo an - cor!

rai del *fp* so - le. Co [me]
 pos - so i ri - mor - si del mio cor,
 pet - to il *fp* cor, il cor!

vi - ta.
 vi - ta. Chi

(Ex. 1)

The chorus, as is usual in such numbers, provides little more than an *oom-pah* marking of the rhythm. But in the welcome which they sing on Arthur's arrival they become musically and dramatically prominent. Here, as elsewhere, we may see Donizetti's technique as foreshadowing Verdi's.

Already in the first act, when she was waiting for Edgar, Lucy's florid, graceful music had displayed her character as romantic heroine. But it is the Mad Scene which gives the pathos and the coloratura another turn of the screw, so to speak. There is a poignant moment here when the orchestra, playing a melody from her love-duet with Edgar (Act I), suggests that she is recollecting that meeting; but now, terrified, she sees 'the fearful phantom' of her murdered husband rise to separate her lover from herself:

Voice Allegretto

Orch. [p]

Allegro vivace LUCY

Ohi-mè! sorge il tre-men - do fan-tas-ma

(Ex. 2)

The companionship—or even rivalry—of voice and flute is a feature of the scene. Here, for instance, voice and flute ripple away together as Lucy sings of bliss for herself and her lover in heaven:

Larghetto

Flute

Voice

LUCY

[*mf*] a noi sa - rà, la [vita]

(Ex. 3)

It may sometimes seem that this music speaks more of prima donnas' showmanship than of madness; yet in the theatre a great artist can even make us forget that we no longer think madness a romantic state of mind.

VINCENZO BELLINI

(1801-35)

OF the same type as Donizetti's operas were those of a composer four years younger, Vincenzo Bellini. In his last opera, *The Puritans* (*I Puritani*; 1835), he not only showed a new adventurousness in harmony, but also set the recitative to be accompanied by the orchestra (not the piano, which had succeeded the harpsichord). This, a procedure occasionally followed by Gluck and certain of Bellini's more immediate predecessors, was designed to lessen the rigid differentiation in the audience's ear between recitative and aria.

What, we may wonder, would Bellini's later works have been like if he had not died at thirty-three?

LA SONNAMBULA

(The Sleep-walker)

Libretto by Felice Romani

First performed: Milan, 1831

Two Acts

Cast in order of singing:

Lisa, keeper of the village inn	<i>soprano</i>
Alessio, a young peasant, in love with Lisa	<i>bass</i>
Amina, a village girl	<i>soprano</i>
Teresa, Amina's foster-mother	<i>mezzo-soprano</i>
A notary	<i>baritone</i>
Elvino, a young farmer, engaged to Amina	<i>tenor</i>
Count Rodolfo	<i>baritone</i>

Chorus of villagers

The scene is laid in Switzerland

The title gives away the element which imparts an unusual twist to the plot. Amina is caught in Count Rodolfo's bedroom at night, but is cleared of suspicion when it is shown that it was only somnambulism that led her there. (The age of Freud would have a different comment on this 'excuse', especially since certain undeveloped hints suggest the possibility that the

Count is Amina's father.) Her actual sleep-walking is, by theatrical tradition, demonstrated by her perilous crossing of a rickety footbridge.

In the opera's kindly depiction of the simplicity of country-folk (they have not even heard of somnambulism until the Count explains) it is a kind of 'serious' complement to Donizetti's comic *Elixir of Love*—another tale of country simplicity from the pen of the same librettist. But *La Sonnambula* lives most of all through the appeal of its melodies to coloratura sopranos and their fans.

ACT I

All the villagers rejoice at the forthcoming wedding of Amina and Elvino—all except Lisa, who keeps the inn. She, repulsing the advances of Alessio, who loves her, is jealous of Amina's good fortune. Amina sings of her joy: 'See how the day serenely' (Come per me sereno). The notary arrives, preceding Elvino, and a betrothal duet follows: 'Take now the ring' (Prendi, l'anel ti dono).

The sound of horses heralds the arrival of Count Rodolfo on an expedition. He decides to stay the night in the village, which evidently has associations for him: 'Ah, how pleasant once more to see it' (Vi ravviso, o luoghi ameni). He pays rather too much attention to Amina for Elvino's liking. Led by Teresa, the villagers warn him of a local phantom. When they have gone, Elvino reproaches Amina for apparently flirting with the Count, but they are reconciled and sing a duet.

Rodolfo is conducted to his room by Lisa, who is not reluctant to flirt with him. Shortly afterwards Amina, in her nightdress, walks into the Count's room. He realizes that she is sleep-walking, hearing her speak of her coming marriage. The villagers and afterwards Elvino are brought in by the jealous Lisa; they put another construction on Amina's behaviour and her protests. There is a prolonged ensemble (for all the characters except the Count) begun by Amina's 'I am guiltless' (D'un pensiero). The combined expression of tension and doubt, during which Elvino breaks off the engagement, ends the act.

ACT II

The villagers are on their way to Count Rodolfo's castle, where they intend to beg him to establish Amina's innocence. They leave. Amina in her distress is comforted by her foster-mother Teresa, but Elvino spurns her. The villagers return to say the Count will be coming to testify for her. Unconvinced, Elvino takes back the ring he gave Amina. But, aside, he admits his feelings: 'Ah, why then can I not hate you?' (Ah, perchè non posso odiarti?).

Nevertheless, he agrees to marry Lisa instead. Lisa rejects, once again, the pleas of Alessio, and rejoices at her new good fortune. While Elvino is

about to arrange this new marriage, the Count attempts to dissuade him. He is adamant and disbelieves the Count's explanation about somnambulism, voiced in a quartet (for Lisa, Teresa, Elvino and the Count) and chorus: 'No, your Lordship!' (Signor Conte).

Suddenly Amina herself is seen, again sleep-walking, on a dangerous ledge or bridge. The villagers watch, not daring to cry out and wake her—and hear her complaining in her sleep that, though innocent, she has lost Elvino. As Amina comes down, still sleep-walking, she sings of her unhappiness: 'Ah! could I think to see you' (Ah! non credea mirarti). Elvino, agonized at his own lack of faith in her, interrupts and places the ring on her finger again. Amina wakes to a joyful chorus, and sings of the happiness now restored to her and Elvino: 'Never was there' (Ah! non giunge); the others (except Lisa, who has withdrawn) join in to end the opera.

* * *

Bellini's lyrical writing does not confine itself only to the heroine and her lover. An extract from the Count's aria in the first act gives an idea of the warm expression of Bellini's solo music and of how, like Rossini and Donizetti, he often used the chorus merely to mark the beat. The Count is greeting those 'dear places' he is now revisiting after many years:

Andante cantabile
COUNT

Voice

[*mf*] Ca - ri luo - ghi io vi tro - vai, ca - ri luo - ghi, io vi tro -

S. A.

Chorus

T. B. [*p*] Quan - do

- vai, — ma quei dì non tro - vo più, ca - ri luo - ghi etc.

mai vi fu co-[stui] etc.

(Ex. 1)

The big ensemble which ends the first act, consequent on the discovery of Amina in the Count's room, was the direct model (even as to key) for Sullivan's parody in *Trial by Jury*, 'A nice dilemma'. Amina leads it;

then, when Elvino enters expressing his anguish at the situation, Amina follows him in canon and with words addressing him directly—‘Do not believe that I am guilty.’ The effect is as if she were trying to enter his thoughts:

Assai sostenuto

AMINA

Voices

[p] Ah mel cre - - di

ELVINO

Vo - glia il cie - lo che il duol ch'io

ah! rea - non so - no mel cre - di etc.

sen - to tu pro - var -

(Ex. 2)

The heroine's vocal fireworks come at the end. The excitement rises as the voice does when Amina sings of the earth transformed by her happiness into 'a heaven of love':

Allegro moderato

AMINA.

del - la - ter - - ra in cui vi - via - - mo ci for -

l - mia - mo un ciel d'a-mor, d'a - - mor, d'a - -

- mor d'a - mor.

(Ex. 3)

NORMA

Libretto by Felice Romani

First performed: Milan, 1831

Two Acts

Cast in order of singing:

Oroveso, arch-Druid	<i>bass</i>
Pollio, a Roman pro-consul	<i>tenor</i>
Flavius, his friend	<i>tenor</i>
Norma, a Druid priestess, daughter of Oroveso	<i>soprano</i>
Adalgisa, a younger priestess	<i>soprano</i>
Clotilda, attendant to Norma	<i>soprano</i>

Chorus of Druids, soldiers and people
 The scene is laid in Gaul in Roman times

The conflict in a hero or heroine between love and duty is the mainspring of many operas. In this one, Norma's holy obligations as a Druid priestess are opposed to her love for the Roman pro-consul, Pollio, and involve her finally in suicide. An exotic background to the human struggle is provided by the setting in ancient Gaul. The point is emphasized when, before her great invocation to the moon—the 'Chaste Goddess' (*Casta diva*) of the famous aria—Norma cuts off a spray of mistletoe with a sickle from the sacred oak. She is, by the way, no girlish heroine; her maturity and strength are contrasted with the inexperience of the younger priestess, Adalgisa. A performance which reverses the two is a perversion. Norma is a positive rather than a passive heroine, her acts of will influencing the plot: there is a power of characterization here, as well as a brilliance of vocal writing in the role, which contributes to the opera's strength.

The Roman names are here given in the authentic Latin forms: 'Pol-lione' and 'Flavio' are the Italian originals.

ACT I

To the sacred oak come the people of Gaul in procession, followed by the Druids, who are addressed by Oroveso, their head. They pray for victory over the Romans and retire. The Roman officers, Pollio and Flavius, enter. Pollio, formerly in illicit love with Norma, chief Druid priestess, by whom he has two children, mentions that he now loves a younger priestess, Adalgisa. In an aria 'We at the shrine of Venus' (*Meco all'altar di Venere*) he voices his foreboding of Norma's vengeance. In the distance the Druids' rites are heard.

Now the Romans retire as the Druids return to welcome Norma, who

advances and speaks prophetically of Rome's coming fall. Then, cutting off the sacred mistletoe, Norma addresses the rising moon—'Chaste Goddess' (*Casta diva*)—supported by Oroveso and the chorus of people. Aside, she discloses her love for Pollio. All then leave.

Adalgisa enters and prays for the protection of her gods. Pollio reveals himself and woos her: Adalgisa is at first hesitant, but then admits that she returns his love.

Norma is at home with her children, and reveals her sorely disturbed feelings. She bids Clotilda, her attendant, hide the children as the young Adalgisa approaches. There follows a duet for Adalgisa and Norma: 'I was the same' (*Io fui così*). Adalgisa's confession to Norma of her illicit love awakens Norma's sympathy: for she too broke her priestly vow of chastity. But then Norma asks Adalgisa who her lover is. 'Here he comes', Adalgisa replies, for Pollio approaches. Passions rise as the two women realize his deception. Finally the striking of the sacred shield is heard, in the distance, summoning Norma to inspire the people. The distant chorus of Druids add their voices to those of the three soloists.

ACT II

It is night. Norma holds a dagger and contemplates her sleeping children, whom, in her agony, she is tempted to kill. But she refrains, and sends Clotilda to bring Adalgisa. Norma presents the children to Adalgisa and bids her take them when she goes with Pollio to Rome, while Norma will die. Adalgisa begs Norma, instead, to live for the children's sake and says she will turn Pollio's affections back to Norma. The duet for the two women—'Take thou then' (*Deh! con te*)—ends in passionate avowal together.

Within the Druids' forest, Oroveso and chorus show their hatred of the Romans but feel powerless until Norma advises them. At the temple, Norma hears from Clotilda that Adalgisa wishes to renew her vows as priestess but that Pollio has sworn to tear Adalgisa from the altar. Norma strikes the sacred shield three times and the Druids, entering to hear her, sing a chorus of war. Clotilda runs in with the announcement that a Roman attempting to enter has been caught. It is Pollio. Norma takes a dagger to kill the interloper but cannot strike the blow.

Norma takes Pollio aside. When he rejects her demand that he shall leave Adalgisa, she vows that Adalgisa shall be burnt as a priestess who has betrayed her vows. The people are told to prepare for a burning. But when Norma is asked to name the guilty priestess she replies 'I'. The people are incredulous, but Norma persists. When her children are brought in Norma asks Pollio to take care of them, but he stands aside.

Anguished, Norma's people prepare to sacrifice her. Much moved, Pollio goes with her to be sacrificed.

Among Bellini's melodies, with their smooth flow and long spans, Norma's invocation to the moon, 'Chaste Goddess', is perhaps the most famous of all:

Andante sostenuto assai
NORMA

[p] Cas - - - ta Di - - va, cas - ta
di - va che i - nar - gen - ti

(Ex. 1)

The duet of Norma and Adalgisa in Act II, after presenting the two women as opposed, finally shows them united in mutual feelings. Adalgisa begs Norma to have regard to her 'darling children', now kneeling before her, and Norma feels her resolution weakening. This new unity between the women is naturally paralleled in the music:

Andante
NORMA Ah, per-chè ——— la mia co-stan - za voi sce-
Voices [f]

ADALGISA Mi-ra, O Nor - ma, a tuoi gi - noc - chi que - sti
Orch.

- ma - re con mol - li af-fet - ti?
ca - ri tuoi par - go - let - ti.

(Ex. 2)

But Norma herself is no mere mouthpiece for euphonius music. This is a genuinely dramatic part. The trio just before the end of Act II has been well said to foreshadow the end of Verdi's *Aida*. In her final duet with Pollio, Norma has to 'punch' out a simple melody to make it carry

GIUSEPPE VERDI

(1813-1901)

VIVA VERDI' was the popular slogan when the composer went to Naples in 1858. It was a slogan with a hidden political meaning: 'Viva Vittorio Emanuele Rè D'Italia!'—a cheer (which could not be voiced openly in Naples under the Bourbons) for King Victor Emanuel of Piedmont, whom liberal opinion hoped to make king of a united Italy (as actually happened in 1861).

The identification of Verdi with liberal ideals was not just an acrostic. He was sympathetic to the liberal cause (which, in the nineteenth-century Italian context, meant the anti-clerical as well as anti-despotic cause) and eventually accepted nomination as a deputy in the parliament of the new Italy, though he was not active in politics. Moreover many of his operas made biting social or political comment and ran into trouble with censorship (see *Rigoletto* and *A Masked Ball*, below); and, even in a work like *Aida*, the casting of the priests as an intolerant and vindictive force behind the throne would not have been considered accidental in Verdi's Italy. In the early *Nabucco* (short for Nabucodnosor, i.e. Nebuchadnezzar; 1842) the celebrated chorus of exiled Hebrews was heard as a patriotic lament of contemporary Italians in political exile. So was the chorus of Scottish exiles in *Macbeth* (1847).

Verdi was not, in fact, writing a kind of refined diversion for an international audience of canary-fanciers. He was writing a kind of romantic drama intended to appeal—in its melodies, its plots and its stagecraft—to the Italy of Cavour (one of Verdi's great heroes), Garibaldi and Manzoni (the patriotic novelist in whose memory Verdi wrote his Requiem). It is the achievement of Verdi's genius to have lifted this type of drama beyond the circumstances of its creation.

Love-duets, bold and catchy choruses, brilliant arias for soprano and heroic ones for tenor—these are the traditional ingredients for Italian opera, and Verdi started off with them. But as he progressed, he came to place less stress on such individual numbers, each complete and rounded off and ready to be followed by applause. Instead he developed a greater continuity of drama-through-music, prominently using the device of musical recall (reintroducing a theme when the drama recalls some person

or situation previously encountered). Verdi's last two operas, *Otello* and *Falstaff*, depend much more on their total sweep, less on their individual songs and choruses, than do the earlier works.

Apart from works mentioned above and those discussed in the following pages, some of Verdi's other operas such as *I Lombardi* (1843) and *Ernani* (1844) are occasionally revived.

RIGOLETTO

Libretto by Francesco Maria Piave, after Victor Hugo

First performed: Venice, 1851

Three Acts

Cast in order of singing :

The Duke of Mantua	tenor
Borsa, a courtier	tenor
Countess Ceprano	mezzo-soprano
Marullo, a courtier	baritone
Rigoletto, the Duke's jester, a hunchback	baritone
Count Ceprano, a nobleman of Mantua	bass
Count Monterone, a nobleman of Mantua	baritone
Sparafucile, a professional assassin	bass
Gilda, Rigoletto's daughter	soprano
Giovanna, her attendant	mezzo-soprano
A page	mezzo-soprano
An usher	baritone
Maddalena, Sparafucile's sister	mezzo-soprano

Chorus of courtiers, servants, etc.

The scene is laid in Mantua in the sixteenth century

Rigoletto is an opera to stir the moral passions. It is this quality that helps to make the opera a persistent favourite—apart from the sheer musical gifts of Verdi that have made 'La donna è mobile' and the major-key theme of the quartet among the best-known tunes of the world. The hero of the opera is a hunchback jester who is made the cruel sport of an idle court. But the hunchback's vengeance is terribly turned back on himself. A dramatic force is made of the curse laid on the jester—*The Curse* was the opera's originally intended title. (It may seem curious that, in this and later operas too, the 'progressive' Verdi attached such dramatic validity to the superstition of cursing.)

The opera's implied attack on court life, doubtless appealing to Verdi himself and his original audiences, brought composer and librettist

into conflict with the censor at Venice (at that time under Austrian imperial rule) who banned the original libretto as enshrining 'revolting immorality and obscene triviality'; however, after some changes of names, the plot was eventually accepted.

ACT I

To music from a band back-stage (light music suitable for a gay gathering), the curtain rises to show the Duke's palace. In conversation with Borsa the Duke mentions the latest girl he has his eye on, whose name he does not know. He shows his devil-may-care attitude towards women: 'Shall I bind me?' (*Questa o quella*).¹ The band strikes up a minuet in which the Duke dances with Countess Ceprano, whom he has also been pursuing.

Marullo brings the courtiers a surprising discovery: their ugly hunch-back jester, Rigoletto, keeps a mistress. Now Rigoletto himself enters and mocks Ceprano, whom his master is openly attempting to cuckold. There is a big ensemble, mainly of revelry, but Ceprano is planning vengeance. Suddenly Monterone, a nobleman whose daughter the Duke has seduced, pushes his way in; the Duke allows Rigoletto to mock Monterone, then orders his arrest. Monterone curses Rigoletto—and continues to do so as he is led out. For the others, the revelry continues.

A change of scene shows Rigoletto returning home as the evening darkens, Monterone's curse still preying on his mind. He is accosted by an assassin, Sparafucile, who offers his services and explains his methods. Rigoletto says he has no use for him—at present. As Sparafucile leaves, Rigoletto thinks of his own pitiful state. He, too, is a hireling—like an assassin, except that he uses his mocking tongue instead of a dagger: 'We are equals!' (*Pari siamo*).

Entering his home, he is greeted by Gilda. She is his daughter, not (as Marullo had told the courtiers) his mistress. They have been here three months, but he has kept her locked up, and he now emphasizes that she must never go out except to church. He tells her of her dead mother, showing a grief which Gilda tries to comfort. He sternly warns her attendant, Giovanna, to guard her well.

Unseen, outside, the Duke has arrived. Gilda is the new girl he was pursuing, and only now does he realize that she is Rigoletto's daughter. When Rigoletto, hearing some noise outside, opens the gate, the Duke slips into the garden, throws a bribe to Giovanna and conceals himself. Before leaving the house again Rigoletto sings in an impassioned duet with Gilda and again warns Giovanna to guard her. Gilda now confides to Giovanna that she has been attracted by a youth she saw in church. It is the Duke, who shows himself and professes his love; they sing together 'Love to the heart is the fair light of morning' (*E il sol dell'anima*). He

¹ English version by Edward J. Dent (O.U.P.).

declares that he is a student, by name Gualtier Maldè. Outside, unknown to both, the courtiers are gathering; Ceprano's and Borsa's voices are heard. They are planning to abduct Rigoletto's 'mistress'. After a passionate farewell to Gilda, the Duke leaves.

Gilda, alone, echoes the words 'Gualtier Maldè', and declares 'Ah, how dear to me that name!' (*Caro nome*). The words 'Gualtier Maldè' die away on her lips as she enters the house by an outside stairway; the conspirators can see her over the wall, and marvel at her beauty. It is now dark. Rigoletto is accosted by the conspiring noblemen who pretend to him that they are going to abduct Ceprano's wife. Rigoletto joins them. Under pretence of masking him they blindfold him. There is a softly excited chorus of conspiracy as they make the blindfold dupe hold a ladder against the wall of his own house and abduct Gilda before Rigoletto discovers—as he now does, too late—that his eyes are bandaged. He rushes into the house and finds her gone. In anguish he recalls Monterone's curse ('Ah! la maledizione!')

ACT II

Back in the palace the Duke is disconsolate because, on returning to Rigoletto's house, he could not find Gilda. (The abduction had been made without his knowledge.) He sings with genuine passion of Gilda: 'Ah me, could I but wipe away' (*Parmi veder le lagrime*). Then the courtiers enter and tell him that they have abducted and brought to the palace Rigoletto's 'mistress'. The Duke realizes it is Gilda and goes off to 'console' her.

Rigoletto enters, arrayed as jester but in anguish. The appearance of a page discloses that the Duke is busy. Rigoletto's anger bursts out: 'I'll have my daughter!' The word 'daughter' stuns the courtiers, whom Rigoletto now denounces: 'Oh ye courtiers, vile rabble' (*Cortigiani, vil razza*)—his fury then softening into a plea to have Gilda restored to him. She rushes in. Rigoletto orders the courtiers out. Gilda tells her story: 'Every Sunday morning' (*Tutte le feste al tempio*); Rigoletto consoles her. Just then Monterone is led, under guard, across the scene. Seeing Rigoletto, Monterone declares that his curse was evidently in vain. But Rigoletto now plans revenge on the Duke both for his own sake and for Monterone's. In the duet 'I pronounce thy fatal sentence' (*Sì, vendetta*) Gilda pleads with her father for mercy on the Duke but he refuses.

ACT III

Sparafucile keeps an inn where his sister Maddalena acts as a decoy for robbery or murder. The Duke, inside, is observed from outside by Rigoletto and Gilda (who has been brought by her father to see the kind of man the Duke really is). The Duke sings his opinion of women: 'Wayward as thistledown' (*La donna è mobile*). Sparafucile comes out of

the house and asks Rigoletto—on whose instructions he has evidently lured the Duke there—for further orders. A quartet follows: inside the house the Duke is lightheartedly making love to Maddalena (who affects to resist him, but is charmed), while Gilda and Rigoletto look on from outside.

Rigoletto, thinking that the town will be unsafe for them when he has accomplished the deed he has in mind, instructs Gilda to go home, put on boy's clothing and leave for Verona. She departs unwillingly. Rigoletto arranges payment with Sparafucile for killing the Duke—whose body is to be sewn up in a sack—and says he will return at midnight. A storm rises as Maddalena shows the Duke the way to the upper room for the night. She descends to the lower room and pleads with her brother not to kill the young man ('he's an Apollo') and to murder Rigoletto instead—a suggestion Sparafucile indignantly repudiates as unworthy of an honest assassin under contract to his client. But he agrees to substitute for the Duke any other male victim who may present himself before midnight. Gilda, now in boy's clothes, has returned and anxiously stands outside: resolving to sacrifice herself for the Duke, she enters. What happens in the house amid the storm and darkness is left to the imagination.

The storm ceases. Rigoletto enters as midnight strikes; he receives from Sparafucile a sack with a body in it and goes exultantly to throw it in the river. Suddenly from the house a voice is heard—the Duke's voice, with his unmistakable song, 'Wayward as thistledown' (*La donna è mobile*). The horrified Rigoletto opens the sack and in it discovers Gilda, not quite dead. She asks forgiveness for disobeying him, and dies. With a cry from Rigoletto—who recalls Monterone's curse—the opera ends.

* * *

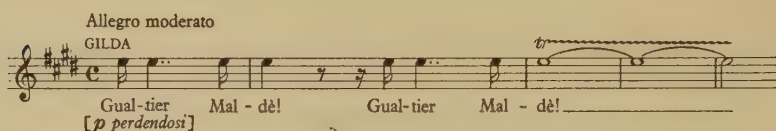
The musical drama in *Rigoletto* is much more closely integrated than in the older (Donizetti-Bellini) kind of Italian opera. Instead of a formal overture there is the orchestral pronouncement of the 'curse' theme which appears throughout the opera:



(Ex. 1)

And just as the orchestra thus becomes a voice, so the chorus becomes instruments: in the storm scene they sing wordlessly for purely atmospheric effect. The element of display in the vocal parts, while sufficient for their

characters to be musically conveyed, is subordinated to drama. Gilda disappears into her room at her father's house with her lover's supposed name of 'Gualtier Maldè' on her lips, and the name fades out on a dreamy trill:



(Ex. 2)

That is what Verdi wrote. (We omit the subdued chorus of those who are about to abduct her.) The prima donna who puts it up to top E (an octave above what Verdi wrote) is impertinently thinking of herself, not of Gilda. The tune in which the Duke sings of woman's fickleness ('La donna è mobile') is marvellously catchy—and its catchiness is itself part of the drama: a few bars must serve to identify both the tune and its singer at the moment of climax when Rigoletto is bearing on his shoulders the sack supposedly containing the Duke's body.

Verdi does not need a solo to establish every character: Maddalena has

Andante

GILDA

MADDALENA

DUKE

RIGOLETTA

[*P*] In - - -

[*P*] Ah! Ah! ri - do ben di

[*P*] Bel - la fig - lia dell' a - mo - - re,

[*P*] Ch'ei

fe - - li - ce cor -

co - re, que - ste bai - e co - stan po - co etc.

schia - vo son de' vez - zi tuo - - i;

men - ti - - va, ch'ei

(Ex. 3)

none, but her concerted music defines her as clearly as anyone else on the stage. The high point of the opera is no solo at all but the quartet where even Maddalena's laughing—she says, but only half-truly, that she does not believe the Duke's pretensions of love—is woven into the texture at the same time as the Duke lightheartedly woos her. Meanwhile Gilda pours out her anguish in a long phrase which is paralleled in her father's vocal line (note Verdi's way of conveying sympathy between characters) (Ex. 3).

IL TROVATORE

(The Troubadour)

Libretto by Salvatore Cammarano

First performed: Rome, 1853

Four Acts

Cast in order of singing:

Ferrando, captain of the guard to the Count of Luna	<i>bass</i>
Inez, confidential maid to Leonora	<i>soprano</i>
Leonora, lady-in-waiting at the court of Aragon	<i>soprano</i>
The Count of Luna, a young nobleman, in love with Leonora	<i>baritone</i>
Manrico, a troubadour, reputed son of Azucena	<i>tenor</i>
Azucena, a gipsy	<i>mezzo-soprano</i>
A gipsy	<i>baritone</i>
A messenger	<i>baritone</i>
Ruiz, a soldier in Manrico's service	<i>tenor</i>

Chorus of followers of the Count and of Manrico, soldiers,
nuns and gipsies

The scene is laid in Spain in the fifteenth century

Il Trovatore lives by its stream of memorable melodies. The Miserere, the Anvil Chorus, the Soldiers' Chorus, Manrico's 'Di quella pira', Luna's 'Il balen', Azucena's 'Stride la vampa', the duet 'Ai nostri monti'—all these would inevitably be in a short list of the most popular of all operatic tunes, tunes heard repeatedly with delight in thousands of drawing-rooms and bandstands. But the opera was also intended to be exciting dramatically, with its scenes of gipsy life and of abduction from a convent. This is romantic opera, in which the characters display their romantic aspects as a means of moving the drama forward: the soldiers, even in private, still sing about the splendours and glory of fighting.

The plot is complicated, and far-fetched in an old-fashioned way: we

are to believe that, before the opera opened, the gipsy Azucena, raving, 'hurled into the flames her own child, instead of the young Count (thus preserving, with an almost supernatural instinct for opera, the baby that was destined to grow up into a tenor with a voice high enough to sing "Di quella pira")'. We quote this from one of the classics of operatic literature¹—though we must spoil the fun a little by adding that the high C's with which the tenors insist on preening themselves in this aria are not Verdi's at all, but an interpolation.

It is further demanded that the Troubadour, instead of flying off to the rescue of his mother for whom the stake is already burning, shall stay and sing of his intentions for two verses of that very song (an extreme example of a 'contradiction' implicit in opera and mocked by Gilbert and Sullivan). The second verse is therefore often cut in performance.

Much of the story happens *between* the acts and before the opera begins, as indeed is explained in Ferrando's opening narration. Performances in Italian before English-speaking audiences, who fail to follow this narration and subsequent explanatory passages, have given the opera the reputation of being much more absurd than it really is.

ACT I

The curtain rises on a guard-room. Ferrando, captain of the guard, reminds his men that their master, the Count, loves Leonora and wishes to track down a mysterious troubadour in whose serenading of her he detects a rival. Ferrando also tells about the gipsy Azucena's misdeed of many years ago: when her mother was being burned at the stake, Azucena threw a baby (the present Count's abducted young brother, as all believe) into the flames.

The scene changes to the garden. Leonora confesses to her attendant Inez that she loves the unknown knight who comes to serenade her. She expresses her love: 'Within my heart a flame is raging' (*Di tale amor che dirsi mai può*).² The Count, who loves (but is not loved by) Leonora, enters the garden, when the sound of a harp discloses the presence of the serenader. It is the troubadour, Manrico, who now woos Leonora in song. A trio follows for Leonora, Manrico and (unseen at first, then fiercely denouncing the lovers) the Count. The two men face each other in anger as the curtain falls.

ACT II

We see Manrico again—in the gipsies' camp. The mysterious troubadour is thus revealed as a gipsy, the son (as he supposes) of Azucena. After the gipsies' opening Anvil Chorus, as they begin their day's work, Azucena

¹ Kobbé's *Complete Opera Book* (1919, with later revisions).

² English version by Edward J. Dent (O.U.P.).

sings of the harrowing sight she witnessed when they burnt her mother: 'Harsh roars the greedy flame' (*Stride la vampa*). After the other gypsies have left, she explains in a further song that she was ready to avenge her mother by throwing the present Count's abducted infant brother into the flames but instead, distracted, threw in her own son.

Then who is Manrico, if not her son? He himself tells her of meeting the Count in battle and being prevented by some mysterious feeling from killing him. Now a message arrives telling him that Leonora, believing him dead, is to enter a convent that evening. After a duet with Azucena reflecting his agitation, he leaves.

Outside the convent the Count, attended by Ferrando, sings of his love for Leonora: 'No faint star' (*Il balen del suo sorriso*). He plans to abduct her before she takes the vow. He and his followers retire and comment, unseen by the nuns who now approach in procession. Leonora, attended by Inez, is ready to enter the convent building, but the Count and his men step forward to abduct her. Suddenly Manrico appears, attended by Ruiz and other followers. Leonora can hardly believe her senses. Her voice rides above the big ensemble which expresses the agitation of all. Manrico's forces prevail and he leads Leonora away.

ACT III

The soldiers of the Count, who is now laying siege to the castle to which Manrico has taken Leonora, are in camp. Led by Ferrando they sing of the coming assault in the Soldiers' Chorus. Ferrando brings the Count news that an old gypsy has been apprehended. It is Azucena, whom the Count and Ferrando interrogate and recognize; not only is she held responsible for the baby-killing of long ago but she declares herself the mother of their enemy, Manrico. She is condemned to the stake.

In the besieged castle Manrico sings to Leonora of his love: 'When I to thee in bonds of love' (*Ah sì, ben mio*). They are about to be married and an organ from the chapel of the castle is heard. Ruiz enters with the message that Azucena has been captured by the enemy. Manrico sings of his determination to leave the castle (and his bride) to save his mother: 'That foul flame yonder' (*Di quella pira*); Leonora, Ruiz and a chorus of Manrico's soldiers join in. He leaves hastily.

ACT IV

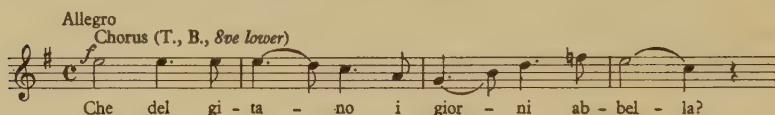
Manrico's effort has failed. He and Azucena lie in a prison-tower of the Count's. But unknown to him, at night, Leonora is outside with Ruiz. She sings of her love: 'Borne on the wings of love so bright' (*D'amor sull'ali rosee*). In the distance, a choir is heard chanting the *Miserere* for an approaching death, over which are heard the lamenting of Manrico and the forebodings of Leonora. The Count enters. Leonora accosts him and

eventually offers to marry him if he will free Manrico (she plans to take poison herself): 'O see, the bitter tears I shed' (Mira, d'acerbe lagrime). He accepts the offer jubilantly.

Inside the tower Azucena is delirious and Manrico tries to soothe her: 'Home to our mountains' (Ai nostri monti). Leonora enters to tell Manrico he is free but he, saying that he guesses the terms, repels her. She then explains that she has taken poison, and dies in Manrico's arms. The Count comes in and finds himself tricked. Manrico is taken outside for execution. Azucena informs the Count he has executed his own brother, and exultantly declares that her mother has been, after all, avenged.

* * *

Italian opera in Verdi's day was meant to provide 'hit tunes', and Verdi did not fail. Not to be missed is the essentially popular, downright, strongly rhythmic nature of the gipsies' Anvil Chorus:



(Ex. 1)

Even in the numbers expressing the soloists' private thoughts of anguish or desire, Verdi manages to keep the melodies in immediately memorable form, with here and there an ornament that adds an emphasis—like a sigh or an indrawn breath—to emotion:



(Ex. 2)

The latter is Manrico's despairing utterance ('Ah, death, thou comest slowly') when he and his mother are imprisoned and when the mood has been set by the chanted Miserere. The continuation sums up Verdi's power of ensemble. In the first bar Manrico dominates, with his high A flat as he cries 'Do not forget me!' to Leonora (far away, as he thinks). But she is hidden outside his prison and hears him: 'I forget thee?' she cries in the third bar, *her* voice now rising to dominate the music. At the same bar the orchestra begins a 'drumming' rhythm characteristic of

Verdi's expression of moments of fatality; and meanwhile the death-warning of the Miserere continues:

Andante, assai sostenuto

LEONORA 6 3 6 3

Voices [mf] di-te scor-dar - mi di-te scor-dar - mi

MANRIGO 3 6

[mf] te! Non ti scor - dar non ti scor-dar di

Chorus T. [p] Mi - se - re - - re!

B.

Orch. [p]

This musical system is for the first system of the score. It features four staves: two for voices (Leonora and Manrico) and two for the chorus/orchestra. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is common time (C). The tempo is 'Andante, assai sostenuto'. The music includes various ornaments such as sixteenth and thirty-second notes, and triplets. The lyrics are in Italian, with Leonora and Manrico singing 'di-te scor-dar - mi' and the chorus singing 'Mi - se - re - - re!'. The orchestration is indicated by the 'Orch.' label and the dynamic '[p]' (piano).

6 3

Sen - to man - car - - mi Di

3 3

me, ad - dio Leo - no - ra, ad - di -

mi - - se - re - - - -

This musical system is for the second system of the score. It continues the four-staff format from the first system. The lyrics continue with 'Sen - to man - car - - mi Di' and 'me, ad - dio Leo - no - ra, ad - di -'. The music features more triplets and ornaments. The orchestration continues with the 'Orch.' label and the dynamic '[p]' (piano).

te, di te, scor - dar - mi! Di
- o Scon - to col san - gue
- re! mi - se - re - re!

te, di te, scor - dar - mi!
mi - o l'a - mor che po - si in
mi - se - re - re!

(Ex. 3)

LA TRAVIATA

(The Woman Gone Astray)

*Libretto by Francesco Maria Piave, after the play
'La Dame aux Camélias' by Alexandre Dumas the younger*

First performed: Venice, 1853

Three Acts

Cast in order of singing:

Violetta Valéry, a courtesan	<i>soprano</i>
Flora Bervoix, her friend	<i>mezzo-soprano</i>
Baron Douphol, suitor to Violetta	<i>baritone</i>
Grenvil, a doctor	<i>bass</i>
Marquis d'Obigny	<i>bass</i>
Viscount Gastone de Letorières	<i>tenor</i>
Alfredo Germont, in love with Violetta	<i>tenor</i>
Annina, maid to Violetta	<i>soprano</i>
Joseph, servant at the country house	<i>tenor</i>
Giorgio Germont, Alfredo's father	<i>baritone</i>
A messenger	<i>baritone</i>

Chorus of party guests, street revellers, etc.

The scene is laid in and near Paris

'The death of Violetta is of a grand realistic effect, and has drawn many a tear from many fair eyes.' So says the introduction to an edition of the score published for English readers during Verdi's lifetime. This is, indeed, an opera meant to affect the audience by its true-to-life nature: the way the street-noises from the carnival burst into the dying heroine's bedroom is an example. With this dramatic method Verdi drew as strong a set of principal characters as any opera knows. Soprano, tenor and baritone have constantly changing personal relationships—and from the light-hearted drinking-song (Brindisi) of the first act to the heroine's final farewell Verdi gives each change its own memorable music.

La Traviata was originally set (like the play on which it is based) in the audience's own time. It was, however, a failure at its first performance and later was put back into the period of Louis XIV. Today there is every reason for restoring it to Verdi's own period. There would indeed be a case for presenting it *now* as a modern-dress drama (that is, set in our own time) were it not that the situation of the central character—a woman not accepted in 'society' but ready to sacrifice herself so that her lover's sister may make a 'good' marriage—could hardly seem even remotely plausible today.

Dumas's names for the two leading characters were Marguerite and Armand; Verdi's librettist Italianized them as Violetta and Alfredo.

ACT I

The rise of the curtain discloses the well-to-do house of Violetta, a courtesan. (Not a prostitute, selling her favours casually and privately; a courtesan of Violetta's type was a woman who lived a regular social life, attaching herself to one man at a time in an 'underworld' which was frequented by men of fashion but which was not officially recognized by respectable married society.)

A party is in progress to which Violetta welcomes Flora and her other friends. Among them is Baron Douphol, an old admirer of hers. Gastone, another friend, enters and brings with him Alfredo, introducing him to Violetta as one who has long admired her. Beneath her gay manner she is touched. When Alfredo, called on by the other guests, leads a drinking song or Brindisi, 'Let's drink, let us drink from the wine-cup o'er-flowing' (*Libiamo, libiamo ne' lieti calici*),¹ Violetta rises and sings the second stanza; the chorus of guests joins in festively.

Dance music is heard from an adjoining room. As the guests are about to go to dance, Violetta is seized with coughing. She asks her guests to proceed to the dance, but, as she looks in a mirror and sees how pale she is, she finds that one guest has stayed with her. It is Alfredo, who declares that he has loved her from afar for a year. Gastone calls from the other room, and Violetta dismisses Alfredo tenderly.

The other guests return and take their leave. Alone, Violetta reflects on Alfredo: 'How curious' (*E strano*), and then, 'Ah, is it he' (*Ah! fors' è lui*). She seems to see a new, purer life in what Alfredo offers to her. But finally (for she is no more than half-persuaded that such a new life would be possible) she declares—'Free as ever' (*Sempre libera*)—that she can only pursue the gay round of social pleasures.

ACT II

But Alfredo has evidently won her over. He and Violetta have now settled in a country villa not far from Paris. Alfredo, alone, sings of his new happy existence: 'After a wild unruly life' (*De'miei bollenti spiriti*). But when Annina, Violetta's servant, comes in, he learns that she has been in Paris on Violetta's instructions, selling off her mistress's possessions, in order to pay for the idyllic life they have been living. Alfredo is ashamed and embarrassed and immediately leaves for Paris to attend to their finances.

Violetta enters and receives a letter from Flora inviting her to a dance that evening. She is expecting a caller on business, but there enters Giorgio Germont. As Alfredo's father, he comes to denounce Violetta, first of all

¹ English version by Edward J. Dent (O.U.P.).

for squandering his son's money—but discovers that, after all, it is Violetta who has had to sell her possessions. Then he asks her for a sacrifice on behalf of his daughter, 'Pure as an angel from above' (*Pura siccome un angelo*). His daughter, he explains, faces the breaking of her engagement because of Alfredo's 'disgrace'. He asks Violetta to leave Alfredo but not to tell him why. At first she refuses, but eventually she sadly consents, asking Germont only that he should tell his daughter that someone made such a sacrifice: 'Tell her, your daughter dear' (*Dite alla giovine*). Violetta writes a note telling Alfredo that she has left him—without explanation, so that he will think her false to him. Germont has been more and more moved by Violetta's nobility of spirit and he embraces her as a father. He leaves.

Violetta rings the bell and is about to give Annina the note for Alfredo when Alfredo himself enters. Passionately she asks Alfredo to love her as she loves him: 'Love me for ever' (*Amami, Alfredo*). She leaves. He does not understand what is happening until a messenger gives him a letter. It is Violetta's, saying she has left him. In anguish, he sees his father enter. Germont attempts to console his son and proposes to take him home: 'To our home in fair Provence' (*Di Provenza, il mar, il suol*). But Alfredo already suspects that Violetta has gone to Douphol, her old admirer. Seeing the letter which Violetta received from Flora he resolves to go to the party, meet Violetta there, and take his revenge.

The scene now changes to Flora's party. Some of the guests enter dressed up as Spanish fortune-telling gipsies, others as matadors, with appropriate music. Suddenly Alfredo enters and joins a group of card-players. Violetta enters, on Baron Douphol's arm. Alfredo, who is winning at cards, makes insulting remarks which can only be taken to refer to Violetta. Tension rises between him and the baron and a duel seems imminent.

Left alone with Alfredo, Violetta asks him to leave for his safety's sake. Alfredo's fury only rises, reaching a climax when she says (to avoid telling him the truth) that she loves the baron. He calls in the other guests, insults Violetta, and tells them to witness (flinging a purse at Violetta) that he has now paid his debts in full. While the other guests show their indignation at Alfredo's behaviour, Giorgio Germont enters and denounces his son's conduct. In the final ensemble the miserable Violetta is heard affirming that she loves Alfredo still.

ACT III

Violetta, separated from Alfredo, is living alone with the devoted Annina; she is ill with consumption and they have hardly any money left. She is in bed when, early in the morning, the doctor comes to see her. He reassures her, but tells Annina that Violetta has really only a few hours to live.

Annina leaves and Violetta re-reads a letter she has received from Giorgio Germont, revealing that he has told Alfredo of Violetta's sacrifice and that Alfredo is coming to beg her forgiveness. As she reads she hears (in the orchestra) a strain from the melody Alfredo sang when he first declared himself to her—the strain she had taken up in her song at the end of the first act.

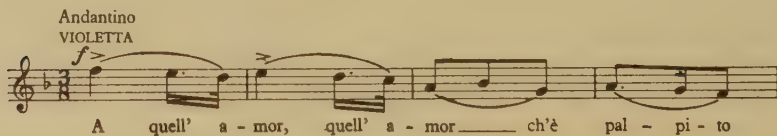
She feels her illness, and laments: 'For ever has faded that dream' (*Addio, del passato bei sogni ridenti*).¹

From outside her window the carnival revellers are heard in the street. Annina returns and admits a visitor: Alfredo. All bitterness is forgotten as the lovers embrace. He speaks of taking her away: 'Come, O my dearest, far from this city' (*Parigi, o cara, noi lasceremo*). But after the exhilaration Violetta feels weak and has to send Annina for the doctor. She realizes that she is going to die. Giorgio Germont enters. Violetta gives Alfredo a medallion, asking him to give it to the girl he eventually marries. Annina has returned with the doctor and all join in as Violetta utters her plea to Alfredo.

Suddenly her agitation leaves her. Reliving the joyful first moments of their love, Violetta dies.

* * *

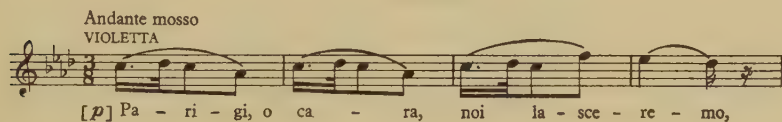
All Verdi's dramatic insight and human sympathy are poured into the delineation of Violetta and her relationship with the other characters. The contrast between the 'brilliant' but hard life of Parisian parties and the idyll of the country retreat is paralleled by the contrast within Violetta's music—between her song at the end of Act I (very remarkably, Verdi does not end the act with Violetta as transformed by Alfredo but with Violetta still the courtesan) and the tenderness of her final 'farewell' song. Particularly subtle is the musical expression of her response to Alfredo. As soon as he has struck up the drinking-song in the first act, Violetta feels drawn to sing the second stanza to the company herself. Then, when he has made his suit to her and left, it is his musical phrase and his very words she takes over in her own aria:



(Ex. 1)

¹ Literally, 'Farewell, smiling dreams of the past'. The common shortening to 'Addio del passato' as if that could mean 'Farewell to the past' is misleading. It is in this aria that Violetta refers to herself as '*traviata*', a woman gone astray.

This also recurs twice (as though returning in Violetta's memory) as she lies dying in the final scene. Similarly, in this scene Violetta is drawn to repeat the words and melody used by Alfredo when he spoke of taking her away from Paris:



(Ex. 2)

This particular section of music corresponds in fact to the slow section of the old-fashioned operatic aria divided into a slow, pathetic opening and a more brilliant concluding part. Verdi, like other composers before him, modified the convention for the sake of dramatic realism. After the slow section there is an agitated interruption, when Annina is sent again for the doctor. Only after that is the quick concluding part allowed to follow: 'Oh, God, I am too young to die' (Ah Gran Dio! morir si giovine):



(Ex. 3)

Here, in fact, Verdi unites the psychological strength of slow-followed-by-fast music with the dramatic strength of 'realistic' interruption.

As remarkable as the portrayal of the lovers is that of Giorgio Germont who—unlike almost all such 'baritone father' parts—undergoes a real development of character. Violetta softens even him. His music is noble in the conventional operatic sense, but never heavy or blustering. Even his self-righteousness is transformed into tenderness:



(Ex. 4)

SIMON BOCCANEGRA

*Libretto by Francesco Maria Piave, after a play by
Antonio García Gutierrez; revised version
with alterations by Arrigo Boito*

First performed: Venice, 1857

Revised version: Milan, 1881

Prologue and Three Acts

Cast in order of singing:

Paolo Albiani, leader of the plebeian party, later a favourite associate of Boccanegra as Doge	<i>baritone</i>
Pietro, a Genoese goldsmith, later an associate of Boccanegra as Doge	<i>baritone</i>
Simon Boccanegra, Corsair in the service of the Genoese Republic, later the Doge	<i>baritone</i>
Jacopo Fiesco, a Genoese nobleman, later going under the name of Andrea	<i>bass</i>
Amelia, going under the surname Grimaldi, not knowing herself to be Boccanegra's daughter	<i>soprano</i>
Gabriele Adorno, a Genoese of noble family	<i>tenor</i>
Amelia's maid	<i>soprano</i>
Captain of the Archers	<i>tenor</i>

Chorus of sailors, people, soldiers, servants to Fiesco,
the Doge's courtiers, senators, etc.

The scene is laid in and near Genoa, in the fourteenth century

Simon Boccanegra was a historical Doge (ruler) of Genoa in the fourteenth century. He was a plebeian (that is, he was not of noble birth) and was poisoned—facts which were incorporated into Gutierrez's Spanish drama and into the opera which Verdi based on it. There is, as often with Verdi, a strong intermingling of political and personal passions in such a way as to provide strong emotional situations—a villain forced to pronounce a curse on himself, a father recognizing his long-lost daughter, a death-bed forgiveness, and so on. It adds up to a forceful drama: and if the score has not the memorable melodies of Verdi's earlier operas, it has power and psychological truth.

But the opera was originally (1857) a failure, and Verdi not only got Arrigo Boito to revise the over-complicated libretto (the great Council Scene is entirely Boito's addition) but himself made many additions and alterations, both small and great. (Boito as an original librettist we shall consider under *Otello*, page 136, and *Falstaff*, page 142.) The result is still

dramatically rather complex and 'difficult' (especially the twenty-five-year gap between the Prologue and Act I); but Norman Tucker in his successful English version (Sadler's Wells, 1948) simplified the action a little further, and it is his version that is followed in the ensuing synopsis. We have, however, designated the final scene Act III (on its own, as in the original) and not as Act II, Scene 2, as in Tucker's version. Incidentally, Tucker preferred the more familiar Italian form of 'Simone' in the title; but 'Simon' is Verdi's original (though in the opera itself 'Simone' is also sung).

PROLOGUE

In Genoa, in a square showing the church of San Lorenzo and the Fiesco Palace, Paolo, leader of the plebeian party, is discussing with Pietro the forthcoming choice of a Doge. It is night. Paolo suggests Simon Boccanegra, who has lately restored Genoa's maritime glory by driving the African pirates from the seas. On promise of a suitable reward, Pietro guarantees popular support.

Pietro leaves and Boccanegra enters. At first he is unwilling to accept nomination; but Paolo tempts him with the observation that as Doge he could no longer be refused the hand of the girl he loves—Maria Fiesco, who has already borne him a child and is now held prisoner by her father (the present Doge) in the Fiesco Palace. He agrees to accept nomination. As Boccanegra leaves, a crowd of workmen and sailors enters, led by Pietro. He and Paolo counsel them to support Boccanegra. Paolo angrily points to the palace where Maria is incarcerated: 'See yonder gloomy dwelling' (*L'atra magion vedete*).¹

As they move off, Fiesco emerges from the palace. His daughter Maria has just died and he expresses his own sorrow: 'Weary and worn with suffering' (*Il lacerato spirito*). Sounds of mourning for Maria's death are heard from the palace as he sings.

Boccanegra enters, hoping that he may soon be united with Maria. Fiesco angrily reproaches him, refusing to forgive him even when he offers to pay for his seduction with his life. But Fiesco is prepared to forgive Boccanegra if he will yield up the child Maria bore him. Boccanegra explains that this is impossible, as the child has vanished. Coldly, Fiesco turns away, refusing to hear Boccanegra's plea for reconciliation. Boccanegra knocks at the door of the palace, demanding to see Maria; he finds within only silence and gloom, and discovers that she is dead. As he comes out, horror-struck, voices in the distance are proclaiming him as the new Doge. Paolo and Pietro come to tell him of his election, the news of which dismays Fiesco. Crowds acclaim Boccanegra and bells ring out in his honour.

¹ English version by Norman Tucker (Ricordi).

ACT I

Twenty-five years have elapsed. Simon Boccanegra is still Doge; Fiesco, now using the name 'Andrea', is conspiring against him.

In the garden of the Grimaldi Palace outside Genoa, by the sea, Amelia is admiring the beautiful scene: 'See how sky and ocean' (Come in quest' ora bruna). (She calls herself by the surname Grimaldi and regards Andrea as her guardian.) Her lover, Gabriele, approaches. She warns him that his and Andrea's political intrigues against the present Doge may lead to trouble. Amelia's maid enters, announcing a messenger from the Doge. It is Pietro, who asks Amelia to receive Boccanegra himself. When Pietro has left, Amelia explains to Gabriele that Boccanegra wishes her to wed Paolo; she, of course, wants to marry Gabriele, and asks him to hurry and find Andrea and obtain his consent to their speedy marriage.

Amelia goes into the palace. As Gabriele is about to depart he meets Fiesco, who tells him that Amelia is not a Grimaldi but of unknown humble stock, having been substituted for a child of Count Grimaldi who had died, in order to save the family fortunes from confiscation by the Doge (Count Grimaldi himself is in political exile). Fiesco blesses Gabriele and consents to their marriage.

The sound of trumpets introduces Boccanegra, and Fiesco and Gabriele (as the Doge's enemies) leave hastily. Paolo and others are with Boccanegra, but he sends them away; then, alone with Amelia, Boccanegra hands her a pardon for her 'father', Count Grimaldi. She tells him that she has a lover and does not wish to marry the rapacious Paolo (who seeks the Grimaldi fortunes), and goes on to explain that she is not a Grimaldi by birth but an orphan. It becomes clear to Boccanegra from what she says that she is in fact his long-lost daughter,¹ and this is confirmed when they compare pictures of her mother. They rejoice in the discovery: 'Daughter! when I recall this name' (*Figlia, a tal nome io palpito*).

As Amelia leaves, Paolo enters. Boccanegra, before he goes, tells Paolo to abandon any hopes of marrying her, but Paolo refuses to accept the decision and arranges with Pietro for her abduction.

The scene changes to the council chamber, where Boccanegra, as Doge, presides over an assembly comprising twelve patricians, twelve plebeians (including Paolo) and various officers. He tries unsuccessfully to persuade the council to agree to peace with Venice. In the distance the shouts of an angry mob are heard; Boccanegra sees from a window that Gabriele and another man are being attacked. Paolo is about to flee, but Boccanegra orders the doors to be guarded. The people are calling 'Death to the nobles!' (*Morte ai patrizi!*), to the alarm of the twelve patrician councillors,

¹ In the original her real name is stated by Boccanegra to be Maria. Tucker's English version omits this rather unnecessary further complication.

and even 'Death to the Doge.' Boccanegra sends out a herald to say that he awaits the people. They are quickly pacified, but they enter the chamber demanding the blood of Gabriele. It emerges that Gabriele has killed Pietro, who abducted Amelia; and now Gabriele, believing that Pietro acted on Boccanegra's instructions, attempts to attack Boccanegra himself.

Suddenly Amelia enters and throws herself between the two men. She tells the true story of her abduction. She avers she knows the man responsible, staring pointedly at Paolo. A fight nearly breaks out between the two sides of the assembly and Boccanegra steps angrily between them: 'Nobles! Plebeians!' (Plebe! Patrizi!). An elaborate ensemble follows.

Gabriele yields his sword to Boccanegra, who says he must be a prisoner for one night, till the plot is unravelled. Then Boccanegra calls forcefully on Paolo. He demands that he, as an officer of state, should join in cursing the man who perpetrated these evil doings. Paolo forces himself to pronounce the curse ('Sia maledetto') then shrinks in terror ('Orrore, orror!') of what he has done. All assembled join in the curse and Paolo attempts to flee.

ACT II

Paolo is under guard in a room in the Doge's palace. He sends for one of the guards to bring Andrea, who is also there under surveillance. When Andrea comes, Paolo discloses that he knows he is really Fiesco, but says that he (Paolo) will support Fiesco against the Doge if he may himself marry Amelia. Fiesco rejects such dishonourable terms and leaves. Alone, Paolo pours a slow poison into a glass of wine, planning to kill Boccanegra. But first Gabriele enters. Paolo tells him (falsely) that Amelia, whom Gabriele loves, is Boccanegra's mistress.¹ Paolo leaves and Gabriele expresses his furious jealousy: 'Fiercely within my bosom' (*Sento avvampar nell'anima*).

Amelia enters. She is now living privately as Boccanegra's daughter—not, of course, as his mistress—but when Gabriele accuses her she can only assure him that she is faithful to him, and says she cannot yet tell him of her relationship with Boccanegra. As Boccanegra approaches, Gabriele, determining to murder him, hides on the balcony. Seeing Amelia weeping, Boccanegra asks what is wrong; she discloses that she loves Gabriele—to Boccanegra's great distress, for Gabriele and his family, the Adornos, have been plotting against him. As she departs he considers whether he

¹ This is Tucker's sequence of events. Verdi's own (revised) score has the order: Paolo soliloquizes and prepares the poison—Fiesco and Gabriele are brought in *together*—Paolo tempts Fiesco, who refuses and leaves—Paolo tells Gabriele that Amelia is the Doge's mistress.

can pardon Gabriele. He drinks of the poisoned wine and falls asleep, dreaming of Amelia.

Gabriele enters to find his enemy asleep. He is on the point of stabbing Boccanegra (partly to avenge his own father's death at Boccanegra's hands) when Amelia enters and stops him. Boccanegra wakes and bids him strike, and eventually tells him that by robbing him of his daughter Gabriele has more than avenged his father's death. Gabriele, seeing the situation, is full of remorse, begging Amelia for forgiveness ('Perdon, perdon, Amelia'); Boccanegra prays for the city's peace, and Amelia begs that the spirit of her dead mother may soften her father's heart.

From outside a warlike crowd is heard approaching: a patrician revolt has started, aimed at overthrowing Boccanegra. Boccanegra tells Gabriele to go and join his friends, but he now refuses to fight against Boccanegra and agrees to bear a message of peace to the clamouring rebels. In return, Boccanegra awards him Amelia's hand.

ACT III

The scene is a great hall in the palace. The revolt has been quickly put down, and from outside the people's joyous shouts can be heard. The Captain of the Archers returns his sword to Fiesco, who is now freed. On his way out Fiesco meets Paolo, being brought in under guard: he had escaped to join the rebel cause but now, recaptured, is under sentence of death. Paolo tells Fiesco that he has poisoned Boccanegra. Distant voices are heard intoning a wedding-hymn for Gabriele and Amelia—whom Paolo once again, to Fiesco's fury, calls 'Boccanegra's mistress'.

Paolo is led off to execution and Fiesco conceals himself. From a balcony, a trumpeter calls the people to silence and the Captain announces that the Doge wishes the jubilation to cease as it is offensive to the dead. Alone, Boccanegra enters, unsteadily, feeling ill as the poison begins to take effect. He looks seaward, apostrophizing the element that brought him his glory. Fiesco steps forward and foretells Boccanegra's doom. Boccanegra recognizes the voice as that of Fiesco, long since assumed dead: he tells his old enemy who Amelia is, and the two men are at last reconciled. Sadly Fiesco tells Boccanegra that he has been poisoned.

Amelia and Gabriele enter, with their wedding procession. Boccanegra tells them who 'Andrea' is—Fiesco, father of Maria (who died before Boccanegra could marry her), and thus Amelia's grandfather. Their joy at the marriage and reunion is tempered by the realization that Boccanegra is approaching his death. Boccanegra blesses them. In an ensemble he begs her to come close to him and she prays that he may be spared, while Gabriele and Fiesco, in different ways, bewail the ephemeral nature of human happiness and the courtiers express their grief.

As he dies, Boccanegra gathers the senators around him and in a failing

voice decrees that Gabrielle shall be his successor. Fiesco, from the balcony, tells the people that Gabriele Adorno is their Doge. They call for Boccanegra: he is dead, Fiesco tells them. They pray for him as the curtain falls.



The father-daughter relationship dominates *Simon Boccanegra*. In the prologue Fiesco laments for his daughter Maria who has been seduced by Boccanegra and has died: 'Weary and worn with suffering'. He begins in the minor key; when he changes to the major (with more consoling thoughts of God's pardon) the off-stage chorus of mourners insists on the minor-key sadness:

Andante sostenuto

FIESCO

Voice [m] Il ser - to a lei de' ma - ri - ti pie -

Chorus (S., A.) [p] È mor - ta!

Orch. *pp*

- to - so il cie - lo diè

è mor - ta!

(Ex. 1)

In Act I there is the dramatic scene of recognition between Boccanegra and Amelia when the words 'padre' and 'figlia' ('father' and 'daughter') are many times repeated. Finally, after Amelia has gone off-stage and her father's gaze is lovingly following her, the orchestra plays the tune they have just been singing and we hear the tender words once again:

[Allegro] [p cresc.]

Voices

AMELIA

SIMON BOCCANEGRA

Pa - - -

O fi - glia! o

Orch.

mf *cresc.*

drel

fi - - - glia!

ff

(Ex. 2)

In contrast with these two 'private' scenes is the great 'public' drama of the council chamber in which Boccanegra forces Paolo to pronounce a curse on an unnamed traitor (in reality, Paolo himself). Preceding it is a long utterance by Boccanegra showing his suspicion of Paolo: musically the expression is shared by the orchestra, with explosive figures displaying the force behind the singer's monotone. His words mean: 'You have authority in all that touches the people: on your good faith rests the honour of this city; today I need your help':

Largo assai

Orch.

ff *tutta forza*

BOCCANEGRA

(con tremenda maestà e con violenza sempre più formidabile)

In te ri-sie - de l'au-ster-o drit-to po-po-lar.

sempre col canto *a tempo*

È ac-col - to l'o - no - re cit - ta - din nel - la tua fe - de;

col canto

bra - mol'au - si - lio tuo

a tempo

The musical score consists of two systems. The first system features a vocal line with a treble clef and a piano accompaniment with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The vocal line has a trill (tr) and a triplet (3) over a group of notes. The piano accompaniment also includes trills and triplets. The second system continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment, with the vocal line ending on a whole note. The piano accompaniment includes a section marked 'a tempo'.

(Ex. 3)

UN BALLO IN MASCHERA

(A Masked Ball)

Libretto by Antonio Somma, after Eugène Scribe

First performed: Rome, 1859

Three Acts

Cast in order of singing:

Oscar, a page	<i>soprano</i>
Gustavus III, King of Sweden [Riccardo, Governor of Boston] ¹	<i>tenor</i>
Captain Anckarstroem, Gustavus's secretary [Renato]	<i>baritone</i>
Armfelt, Minister of Justice [A Judge]	<i>tenor</i>
Mam'zelle Arvidson, a fortune-teller [Ulrica, a negro fortune-teller]	<i>contralto</i>
Cristian, a sailor [Silvano]	<i>bass</i>
A servant	<i>tenor</i>
Amelia, wife of Anckarstroem	<i>soprano</i>
Count Ribbing and Count Horn [Samuele, Tomaso], enemies of Gustavus	<i>basses</i>

Chorus of deputies, officials, sailors, guards, people,
conspirators, servants, masked dancers

The scene is laid in and near Stockholm, at the end of the
eighteenth century

¹ For an explanation, see below.

Here are *two* famous soprano roles (tragic heroine and skittish page-boy); strong male solo roles; fine choruses; and sharp dramatic situations. And yet *A Masked Ball* is not quite as popular as some other Verdi operas preceding and following it. Part, at least, of the trouble arises from non-musical circumstances surrounding its creation. We must start with an event twenty-one years before the composer's birth, when on 16 March 1792 King Gustavus III of Sweden was killed by a shot during a masked ball in the court opera-house at Stockholm. The French dramatist Scribe wrote a libretto on this subject for an opera by Auber (1782-1871), which was produced in 1833. On this libretto, Somma's libretto for Verdi—originally to have been entitled simply *Gustavo III*—was based. But in an Italy where revolutionary movements were being repressed with difficulty, an opera depicting the assassination of a king was frowned on by censorship; and the first performance, in Rome, was permitted only on condition of transferring the action to Boston, Mass., in seventeenth-century America under British rule. Only an English governor, not a king, would then have to be shown as the assassin's victim!

The ridiculousness of the action in its American setting has long been felt and, especially in the last few years, the action has been restored in many opera-houses to Sweden. The names of the characters are therefore given here in their authentic Swedish forms, but with Verdi's 'American' (Italianized) names shown in the cast-list in square brackets, since performances on gramophone records still trundle along in the old groove.

ACT I

In the hall of his palace, King Gustavus is about to give an audience: courtiers are singing his praises, and the mutterings of conspirators (among them Count Ribbing and Count Horn) can also be heard. Oscar, the page-boy, announces the approach of the king, who receives various petitions. He glances over a list of visitors invited to a masked ball, and sees with delight that Amelia (the wife of his secretary, Anckarstroem) will be there: secretly, Gustavus loves her. Aside, he shows his feelings: 'I shall behold in ecstasy' (*La rivedrò in estasi*).¹ The courtiers depart and Oscar brings in Anckarstroem.

Anckarstroem tells the king of a plot against him. Gustavus does not take it seriously, but in his song 'Life to you looks ever smiling' (*Alla vita che t'arride*) Anckarstroem bids him do so. Oscar announces the Minister of Justice, who brings for signature an order to banish Mlle Arvidson, a fortune-teller. Gustavus asks the opinion of Oscar, whose plea on the fortune-teller's behalf—'She of the stars above' (*Volta la terrea fronte*)—arouses Gustavus's interest. When the courtiers (and conspirators) return,

¹ English version by Edward J. Dent (O.U.P.).

the king tells them that he will go in disguise to test out the woman's powers: all sing with pleasure of the prospect.

The scene changes to Mlle Arvidson's hut, where a few women and boys listen to her solemn invocation of the powers of darkness, during which Gustavus enters, dressed as a fisherman. A sailor, Cristian, comes to have his fortune told: Mlle Arvidson predicts promotion, and Gustavus ensures the truth of her prediction by writing out a commission and slipping it unseen into Cristian's pocket, which the sailor soon discovers, to his pleasure. A servant of Amelia's comes, asking for a private audience for his mistress. Mlle Arvidson dismisses the crowd but Gustavus manages to hide.

Amelia comes in and tells Mlle Arvidson that she loves Gustavus (he overhears this with delight) but wishes to exorcise this guilty love. The fortune-teller informs her of a special herb, which will serve the purpose if gathered at the gallows-foot by night. In a trio, Amelia prays for strength, Mlle Arvidson tells her not to fear, and the concealed Gustavus sings of his love.

As Amelia departs, the courtiers and Oscar arrive. The king steps forward and, pretending to be a gay, devil-may-care fisherman, asks Mlle Arvidson to tell his fortune: 'To fight for my country' (*Di' tu se fedele*). His hand is that of a nobleman, she says; she asks him not to press her to tell his fate. He and the assembled courtiers insist that she should complete the prophecy. She does: he will soon die, and by a friend's hand. All are horrified except Gustavus himself, who does not take it seriously. His murderer, she goes on to predict, will be the next man to shake his hand. The courtiers all decline to do so. Then Anckarstroem enters; the king immediately grasps him by the hand. Gustavus then tells Mlle Arvidson who he is, and Cristian summons the people to join with the courtiers in singing to him, with only the voices of the conspirators dissenting, and those of Mlle Arvidson and Anckarstroem singing with foreboding of the future.

ACT II

At midnight, near the gallows outside the city, Amelia is seeking the magic herb: 'When the leaf from the stem' (*Ma dall'arido stelo divulsa*). Suddenly Gustavus enters. She tries to send him away, but their love proves too strong. They are interrupted by Anckarstroem, who comes to warn the king that the conspirators are around, intending to kill him. The men exchange cloaks, and Gustavus makes Anckarstroem swear to escort Amelia (heavily veiled and unrecognized by her husband) back to the city without inquiring who she is.

Gustavus goes off and the conspirators, led by Ribbing and Horn, approach. They are frustrated to discover that it is Anckarstroem, not

the king, whom they had seen with the lady. Despite Anckarstroem's protests, they strip off her veil—and he is horrified to find that it is his own wife; Ribbing and the conspirators, however, are amused. To take revenge on the king, Anckarstroem resolves to join the conspiracy, and summons Ribbing and Horn to visit him next day.

ACT III

The next day, Anckarstroem and his wife are at home. He is determined to kill her for her faithlessness. She pleads her innocence and begs for a final favour—'I die, but ere my hour be come' (*Morrò, ma prima in grazia*)—to be allowed to see their small son. He agrees, and she goes out. He addresses an accusation to the portrait of Gustavus that hangs on the wall: 'Yes, 'twas you' (*Eri tu*), and decides to spare her.

Ribbing and Horn arrive. Anckarstroem says he will join their plot and the three swear to avenge themselves on Gustavus. They draw lots to decide who shall strike the fatal blow. The names are placed in an urn and just as one is to be picked Amelia enters to say that Oscar has come. Before they admit him, Anckarstroem compels his uncomprehending wife to pick a piece of paper from the urn. The one she selects bears her husband's name, to his great satisfaction. Again the three men swear vengeance and Amelia begins to understand that they plan to murder Gustavus.

Oscar enters with the invitations to Gustavus's masked ball. Anckarstroem accepts, realizing that this will provide his ideal opportunity. All join in a quintet, Oscar anticipating the evening's delights—'The court will all be there' (*Di che fulgor*)—while Amelia expresses her fears and the others their intention of taking advantage of the chance to kill Gustavus.

The scene changes to Gustavus's palace. The king is alone, writing out an order appointing Anckarstroem Governor of Finland, where he will take Amelia. (The king has thus honourably decided to renounce his illicit love.) Dance music is heard in the distance. Oscar brings in a letter: it is a warning that an attempt will be made on Gustavus's life. But he will not be so cowardly as to stay away, and proceeds with preparations.

The court opera-house has been turned into a ballroom, and the masked ball is now in progress. The three conspirators confer, wondering whether the king has arrived. Anckarstroem meets Oscar and tries to find out Gustavus's disguise for the ball, but Oscar declines to say: 'If you'd be asking' (*Saper vorreste*). Again Anckarstroem presses Oscar, saying that he has important matters to discuss with the king; this time the page gives way.

As a waltz strikes up, Gustavus and Amelia meet, and she tells him to fly from the murderers. He fails at first to recognize her in her disguise: when he does, they sing together as the dance proceeds. She again begs

him to go. He tells her that she will be leaving for Finland with her husband. As they bid one another farewell, Anckarstroem comes and stabs the king.

Amelia and Oscar call for help; Anckarstroem is seized and the crowd call for vengeance. Before he dies, Gustavus assures Anckarstroem of his wife's purity, and orders that he should be spared. Anckarstroem repents his action and, mourned by all, Gustavus dies.

* * *

This is a powerful opera into which—especially when the work is given in its historically correct Swedish setting—the chorus enters with considerable dramatic point, both as the common people who support the king and (men only) as the conspirators who (in Act II) come to assassinate the king and are amused to have surprised their 'enemy' Anckarstroem taking his own wife, veiled, for a midnight walk. The private confrontation of husband and wife next day produces two of the opera's outstanding arias: first for Amelia (when she believes her husband will kill her, but prays to see her young son first):



(EX. I)

and then for Anckarstroem, who addresses the king's portrait and delivers an accusation of the king himself: 'Yes, 'twas you laid the stain of dishonour and shame.' Note the characteristic 'hammering' accompaniment:

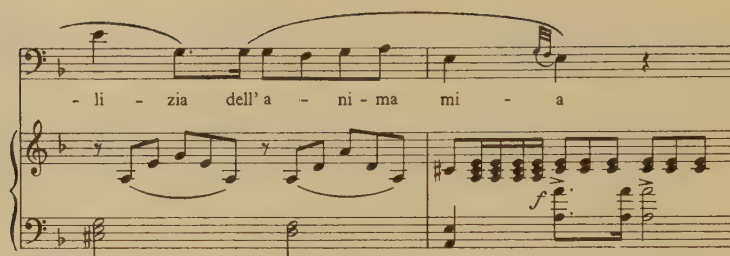
Andante sostenuto
GUSTAVUS

Voice

[p] E - ri tu che mac-

Orch.

- chia - - vi quel - l'a - ni-ma, la de -



(Ex. 2)

Later Anckarstroem's utterance softens as he laments his lost days of love.

The opera also has Verdi's most celebrated page-boy part, that of Oscar, with two arias for a brilliant light soprano voice—in Act I, describing the fascination of the fortune-teller, and in the final scene, when the page's skittish refusal to divulge the king's disguise is dramatically ironic because we know (as the page does not) of the deadly reason why the conspirators are so anxious for him to divulge it. The page replies, 'Oscar knows well, but will not tell!':



(Ex. 3)

LA FORZA DEL DESTINO

(The Force of Destiny)

*Libretto by Francesco Maria Piave, after a Spanish play by
the Duke of Rivas*

First performed: St. Petersburg, 1862

Four Acts

Cast in order of singing :

The Marquis of Calatrava
Leonora, his daughter
Curra, her maid

*bass
soprano
mezzo-soprano*

Don Alvaro, Leonora's suitor	<i>tenor</i>
An official	<i>bass</i>
Don Carlo de Vargas, Leonora's brother	<i>baritone</i>
Trabuco, a muleteer and pedlar	<i>tenor</i>
Preziosilla, a gipsy girl	<i>mezzo-soprano</i>
Brother Melitone, a Franciscan monk	<i>baritone</i>
The Father Guardian of a Franciscan monastery	<i>bass</i>
Two sentries	<i>tenor, baritone</i>
A military surgeon	<i>baritone</i>

Chorus of muleteers, Spanish and Italian peasants, Spanish and
Italian soldiers, camp-followers, beggars

The scene is laid in Spain and Italy about the mid-eighteenth century

Elopement, duels, a woman dressed as a man, gay military music, the chanting of monks . . . Such a list of trusted operatic ingredients made a rich store for Verdi, but (in the event) a rather confused one. Indeed, the title *The Force of Destiny* could be more aptly replaced by *The Force of Coincidence*, for a series of mere chances runs through this opera and diminishes its dramatic credibility, making it little more than a chain of unprompted tableaux. Moreover, *The Force of Destiny* rests on a set of social conventions a good deal more remote from us even than those underlying *La Traviata*. Carlo (Verdi Italianized the Spanish 'Carlos') is justified in killing his sister because she dishonoured the family name in eloping with a lover who killed their father (although accidentally); and Carlo is not, operatically, a 'bad' character.

But the character of Leonora, at least, comes over as a fully sympathetic one; and as an equally sympathetic background we have the consoling figures of the Father Guardian and the serenely chanting Franciscan friars. Among these friars is the heavily humorous Brother Melitone: in his music he is often held to anticipate Falstaff, but because his big scene (the mock-sermon) is based on purposefully bad Italian puns and the crowd's reaction to him, he can hardly make quite the effect that Verdi intended unless the audience follows his every word.

ACT I

The marquis is bidding good night to his daughter in her room at his castle in Seville. He notices her troubled mood, which he attributes to the fact that he has separated her from her suitor (Don Alvaro, whom he regards as unworthy). When he goes she and her maid, Curra, talk of the plans for her elopement, that very night, with Alvaro; she is sorrowful at deceiving her father and leaving her home, singing sadly of the prospect: 'As wanderer and orphan' (*Me pellegrina ed orfana*).

Alvaro arrives. Overcoming her hesitations, Leonora is on the point of leaving with him when footsteps are heard and her father appears, with servants. He angrily orders Alvaro's arrest. Yielding himself, Alvaro throws his pistol at the marquis's feet, but it explodes and the marquis is mortally wounded. As he dies he curses his daughter, who leaves with Alvaro.

ACT II

In an inn at the Spanish mountain village of Hornachuelos, the people are singing and dancing. The clients led by an official sit down to the meal ('A cena!') and a 'student' (in reality the marquis's son Don Carlo, disguised and seeking his sister and her lover) says grace. Leonora arrives—alone, disguised in male clothes—and realizes who the student is. The student starts to question a muleteer, Trabuco, about his travelling companion (he arrived with Leonora), but before he replies the gipsy Preziosilla enters. She sings a gay patriotic song, echoed by the whole company: 'At the sound of the drum' (*Al son del tamburo*). It is momentarily interrupted by Carlo, who asks her to tell his fortune: she predicts tragedy, and adds that she can see he is not really a student.

A group of pilgrims is heard approaching: the assembled company join them in prayer, Leonora praying that she may escape from her vengeful brother. She goes into an inner room. The student then starts questioning Trabuco and the official about the young stranger; Trabuco evades the questions and retires to bed. Next Carlo tries to go upstairs to find the stranger, but the official refuses to let him and asks him who he is himself. Carlo answers: 'I am Pereda, a student' (*Son Pereda*), saying that he is on the trail of a friend called Vargas. The singing and dancing are resumed until all go to bed. Leonora has evidently escaped safely.

The scene changes to the gateway of Hornachuelos monastery. It is bright moonlight and will soon be dawn. Here we rediscover Leonora, still dressed as a man, still a fugitive, and now exhausted. She prays for forgiveness: 'Help me, O Mother of God' (*Madre, Madre, pietosa Vergine*). From within she hears the friars chanting. The doorkeeper, Brother Melitone, at first hesitates to call the Father Guardian, but eventually does so. The Father Guardian sends Melitone away and hears her story. During their long scene together, she tells him who she is (he had heard about her from another priest), and he exhorts her to prayer and repentance; he suggests that she should enter a convent, but she protests imploringly (*'Un chiostro? un chiostro? no'*) and asks to be allowed the use of a hermit's cave near the monastery. He agrees, then calls Melitone and tells him to gather the friars together, and she thanks God for his mercy.

In the monastery chapel, the Father Guardian tells the friars that the

cave is to be occupied. Anyone disturbing the hermit (whose sex, of course, is undisclosed), or trying to find who it is, is accursed ('Maledizion!'). All pray to 'the Virgin of the angels' (la Vergine degli angeli) to extend her protection to the hermit.

ACT III

At night, in a wood near Velletri in Italy, some soldiers are playing cards. Their officer is Alvaro (under a false name), who has joined the Spanish army in Italy fighting against the Austrians. He ruminates on his unhappiness and on Leonora, whom he believes dead: 'O sainted soul' (O, tu che in seno). A cry for help is heard; Alvaro rushes off and comes back with Carlo (also now an officer in the Spanish army) whom he has saved from an attempted assassination. The two men, who have not met before, exchange names (both false) and swear eternal friendship.

An alarm is sounded and they go off to fight. There is a rapid change of scene. A surgeon and some orderlies watch the battle, in which Alvaro leads his men to victory but is wounded. He is carried in: Carlo, complimenting Alvaro on his bravery, says he will be given the Order of Calatrava (that name, his family name, makes Alvaro tremble). Then Alvaro asks Carlo to carry out his last wish, to destroy unopened a packet of papers: 'In this solemn hour' (Solenne in quest'ora).

Left alone, Carlo wonders whether his new friend, who was disturbed when the name Calatrava was mentioned, is his father's murderer. He struggles with his conscience as to whether he should open the papers: 'Fateful urn of my destiny' (Urna fatale del mio destino). In Carlo's valise he finds a small box without a seal—and in it is a portrait of Leonora, confirming his suspicions. He is glad to learn from the surgeon that Alvaro will recover ('Ah! egli è salvo!'), so that he himself can kill his enemy.

The scene changes to an encampment. A patrol passes. Alvaro is alone, in pensive mood, when Carlo enters. He tells Alvaro who he is and demands a duel. Alvaro is unwilling, pleading that it was fate, not he, that killed the marquis, and he affirms real friendship for Carlo. But Carlo (incidentally revealing that Leonora is not dead, as Alvaro thought) deliberately provokes Alvaro and the two men fight. The patrol, re-entering, separates them. Alvaro, saddened, resolves to retire to a monastery.

The scene changes to the main army camp. First, soldiers and female camp-followers (*vivandières*) sing gaily, with Preziosilla offering to tell fortunes: then, after various toasts, the pedlar Trabuco enters, buying booty and selling trinkets; next, a few poor peasants enter, with children, begging for bread ('Pan, pan per carità'); then a group of homesick boy-recruits arrives, soon to be cheered by the camp-followers and Preziosilla. She leads the company in singing and dancing a tarantella. They are interrupted by Melitone, who delivers a mock-solemn sermon, full of

puns ('You prefer bottles to battles!'): eventually he is hustled off by the two groups of soldiers, Italian and Spanish. Another song from *Preziosilla* ('Rataplan', imitating drums) with chorus cheers the company.

ACT IV

The scene moves back to Spain, some time later. Outside the monastery at Hornachuelos, beggars are demanding charity and Melitone is distributing food to them. The Father Guardian is also present. It becomes clear that they much prefer a certain Father Raffaello to Melitone, to his irritation. The Father Guardian reproaches Melitone for his impatience and mentions the virtue and self-denial of Father Raffaello—who is in fact Alvaro, now a monk.

The bell at the gate rings and the Father Guardian sends Melitone to open it. Don Carlo is there: he has at last traced Alvaro, and he asks Melitone to call him. While he waits he reaffirms his resolve to kill Alvaro, and he challenges him when he comes. Feeling no animosity and wanting only to be left in peace as a monk, Alvaro is unwilling to fight: 'Let your threats fly away' (*Le minaccie, i fieri accenti*). Carlo, however, repeatedly taunts him—finally striking his face. Alvaro, who so far has restrained himself, can do so no longer: they run off to fight.

The scene changes to Leonora's lonely hermitage. She is praying—'Peace, grant me peace, O Lord' (*Pace, pace, mio Dio*)—that God may send a speedy end to her suffering. Sounds are heard nearby and she retires into her cavern: then Carlo and Alvaro approach, fighting. Carlo, mortally wounded, calls for a priest, and Alvaro, approaching the cell, calls on the 'hermit' to come. Leonora rings her bell to summon aid and then, coming out, recognizes Alvaro as her lover. In despair, he tells her what has happened, and that her brother lies dying. She rushes off to Carlo. A scream is heard: Carlo has summoned up sufficient strength to strike his 'guilty' sister a mortal blow. Supported by the Father Guardian, she returns to Alvaro, who furiously curses the forces that govern their destiny. In a trio, Leonora and the Father Guardian admonish him. As she dies, Leonora looks forward to a heavenly reunion with Alvaro.



The Force of Destiny starts with a full-scale overture, more often heard at concerts than any other of Verdi's. The opening three hammer-like blows, repeated, constitute a fate motive, which is followed by an agitated theme (in a minor key) from Leonora's scene in Act II outside the monastery gate; later comes Leonora's great major-key 'prayer' from the scene in Act II in which the heroine has arrived at the monastery gate. But the three-note 'destiny' theme, though it recurs in the course of the

overture, does not do so in the actual opera: it is not, therefore, a leading-motive in Wagner's sense.

We may quote from the 'prayer' theme as it occurs in the scene itself, to the words 'Do not abandon me, O God!'; it is one of Verdi's most memorable (and most characteristic) tunes, with a vocal line whose rise and fall seem to portray in turn the strength and weakness of the human spirit:

Allegro assai moderato
LEONORA

[f] Deh! non m'ab-ban - do - nar, pie - tà di me, pie-tà Si - gnor.

(Ex. 1)

Equally famous is the duet ('Solenne in quest'ora') in which Alvaro, who thinks he is dying, asks Carlo to do him a service. Carlo consents: 'I swear it, I swear it.'

Andante sostenuto
ALVARO

So - len - ne in que - st'o-ra giu - rar - mi do - ve - te far

CARLO

pa - go un mio vo - to. lo giu - ro, lo giu - ro

(Ex. 2)

The part of Preziosilla, a gipsy camp-follower, calls for a brilliant mezzo-soprano. She has nothing to do with the basic plot; her music is very effectively designed to throw a lively element into the sombre story. Her 'Rataplan' with chorus is accompanied only by two side-drums on the stage:

Allegro vivo

Voice

Ra - ta-plan, plan, plan, plan, plan, ra - ta-plan, plan, plan, plan,

Chorus
(with side drums)

Ra - ta-plan, plan, plan, plan, plan, ra - ta-plan, plan, plan, plan,

PREZIOSILLA

[f] Ra-ta-plan, ra-ta-plan, del la

plan, ra-ta-plan, plan, plan, plan, plan, ra-ta-plan, plan, plan, plan,

glo-ria pel sol-da-to ri-tem-pa l'ar-dor

plan, ra-ta-plan, plan, plan, plan, plan, ra-ta-plan, plan, plan, plan,

(Ex. 3)

The use of the word 'Rataplan' for this purpose was not new; it became popular in Donizetti's *The Daughter of the Regiment*. The operetta *Cox and Box* (music by Sullivan, words by F. C. Burnand) made fun of this usage in 1867, a few months before *The Force of Destiny* was first staged in London.

DON CARLOS

*Libretto by François-Joseph Méry and Camille du Locle,
after Schiller's play*

First performed: Paris, 1867

Five Acts

Cast in order of singing:

Don Carlos, Infanta of Spain

Thibaut, page to Elisabeth

Elisabeth de Valois, daughter of the King of France

A monk

Rodrigo, Marquis of Posa

Princess Eboli

Philip II, King of Spain

A herald

A voice from heaven

tenor

soprano

soprano

bass

baritone

mezzo-soprano

bass

tenor

soprano

The Count of Lerma

tenor

The Grand Inquisitor, a blind nonagenarian

bass

Chorus of huntsmen, courtiers, monks, soldiers, deputies, people, etc.

The scene is laid in France and Spain, about 1560

Two famous soliloquies—of a king recognizing that his young wife does not love him, and of a woman cursing her own beauty—are among the features of *Don Carlos* which show Verdi's dramatic power at its height. Public and private passions run strong in this opera, which requires bold spectacle as well as highly individual characterization.

Don Carlos is a political drama on the familiar theme of 'liberty versus tyranny'. Schiller's original play presented Don Carlos, son of Philip II of Spain, as a heroic and virtuous young liberal (apparently without historical justification); and his rivalry with his father, both in politics and in love, forms the subject of the play and of Verdi's opera. In Schiller's play the Inquisitor's power compels the king, at the very end, to hand his son over to him; in the opera as written, Carlos is saved from this fate by being spirited away in the nick of time by the ghost of his royal grandfather. At Sadler's Wells (1951) Schiller's more strongly dramatic, non-super-natural ending was used for the opera.

Don Carlos was written in French for the Paris Opéra: it was in the long, five-act form, with ballet, which had become established at that house. In 1884 it was given in Milan as *Don Carlo*, with Italian words by Antonio Ghislanzoni, in a version which jettisoned not only the ballet but the whole first act. This means the loss of a love-duet not only fine in itself but providing a musical phrase purposefully used in later scenes. Modern practice is to restore the first act whatever other incidental cuts may be made. The synopsis below follows this scheme whilst omitting the ballet-episode and one or two other minor episodes in the drama; but it does include the final scene of Act IV, which is sometimes omitted. Since performances not in English will generally be encountered in Italian rather than in French, lines quoted are given in their Italian form. In the four-act version Carlos's aria from the first act is inserted—with different words, 'Ah, I have lost her!' (Io l'ho perduto)—in Act II at a point which is indicated in the synopsis.

Verdi's original French or Spanish names are kept for the personages mentioned, except for Philip II and Charles V, Spanish emperors always so referred to in English history-books.

ACT I

In France, in the forest of Fontainebleau, a hunt is in progress. Princess Elisabeth and her page Thibaut, separated from the other riders, disappear to look for them. Don Carlos, son of King Philip of Spain, is to marry

Elisabeth and, alone, sings of his joy. She, however, has never met him; and now, when she reappears, he introduces himself merely as one of the Spanish envoy's staff. But he shows her what he declares to be a portrait of Don Carlos, which she recognizes as himself. They confess their mutual love.

But then Thibaut, who has left them alone, returns with the message that the king, Carlos's father, intends to marry her himself. Her grief contrasts with the jubilant chorus of courtiers who are heard approaching to greet her on the prospect of becoming a queen.

[By the point of time at which the next act begins—or at which the four-act version of the opera begins—this has taken place: Elisabeth is married to King Philip.]

ACT II

In the cloister of the Yuste monastery in Madrid, near the tomb of Charles V, the chanting of monks, led by one of their number, is heard; they are mourning their late monarch. As the sun rises, the monks depart and Don Carlos enters. [In the four-act version of the opera he sings here of his loss of Elisabeth.] His conversation with a monk discloses that the ghost of Carlos's grandfather, the Emperor Charles V—or perhaps the Emperor himself, not in fact dead—is sometimes seen in the monastery.

Rodrigo, Don Carlos's lifelong friend, enters, newly arrived from the Spanish province of Flanders. He is troubled by Carlos's anguish and asks what is its cause. Carlos explains that he loves his father's wife; Rodrigo advises him to leave Madrid, to obtain his father's permission to go to Flanders and show his worth by helping the oppressed populace there. They swear eternal friendship and ask God for strength to fight for freedom: 'Thou who in every man' (*Dio, che nell'alma infondere*).¹ Philip and his wife enter; he kneels for a moment at the tomb, and they pass on without speaking. The monks resume their chanting, and Don Carlos, though momentarily disturbed on seeing Elisabeth, resumes singing with Rodrigo of their friendship.

The scene changes to a garden, where ladies of the court are passing the time. First the page-boy Thibaut joins them, then Princess Eboli, who sings a Moorish song—the Song of the Veil (*Canzone del velo*), assisted by Thibaut and the assembled ladies. The queen enters, and a moment later Thibaut announces Rodrigo, newly returned from Paris. He presents to the queen a letter from her mother, and also slips another note into her hand.

While Rodrigo and Eboli talk of the news from fashionable Paris, she reads the note: it is from Carlos, asking if he may see her, and Rodrigo adds his own voice to the request. She consents. When Carlos enters the

¹ English version by Arthur Jacobs (E.M.I. Records).

others all withdraw. At first he asks her to persuade the king to make him Governor of Flanders, but when she admits that her love for him is still strong he loses his self-control and addresses her passionately. She draws away, asking if he means to kill his father and marry her, and he rushes off distracted.

Thibaut announces the king, who, angry at finding his wife alone, peremptorily dismisses the lady who should have been waiting on her. She bursts into tears and Elisabeth consoles her: 'Do not weep, my sweet companion' (Non pianger, mia compagna). Rodrigo and the attendant ladies and gentlemen commiserate, and even Philip, who suspects his wife's fidelity, is almost moved into believing in her sincerity.

Rodrigo is left alone with Philip, who asks if he has any favour to request. He asks his harsh king to alleviate the wretched state of affairs in Flanders, but Philip is unmoved, and only warns Rodrigo to beware of the Grand Inquisitor. In a flood of confidence, he tells Rodrigo of his suspicions of the queen and his son, asking him to watch her carefully. But it is with a final warning of the Inquisition that Philip at last dismisses Rodrigo.

ACT III

Don Carlos has received an anonymous note (which he presumes is from the queen) making an assignation. To fulfil it, he now waits in the queen's garden at midnight. A veiled woman enters and Carlos sings of his love. Suddenly he realizes that it is not Elisabeth, but Princess Eboli, to whom he has poured out his heart. She in fact loves him, and quickly guesses that his words were intended for another—the queen. Rodrigo arrives and tries to smooth over the situation, but Eboli is furiously jealous and warns them that she is determined to exact revenge. As she goes, Carlos and Rodrigo pledge their mutual faith, and Carlos entrusts to Rodrigo some vital secret papers—correspondence with the revolutionary leaders in Flanders.

The next scene takes place in a square in front of a cathedral, a funeral pyre prepared for an *auto-da-fé* is visible. Crowds sing in honour of the king. Monks singing a funeral chant bring forward the prisoners condemned by the Inquisition; then the crowds resume jubilantly as a procession of courtiers, deputies and pages, and including Elisabeth and Rodrigo, draws up before the cathedral. A herald announces the opening of the cathedral doors, disclosing the king; the people prostrate themselves.

Don Carlos leads in six Flemish deputies, who fall in supplication before the king. They make a moving plea for mercy for their people, but it is rejected out of hand by Philip and the monks, although the crowd are sympathetic. Eventually, Carlos steps forward and asks to be appointed ruler of Flanders, so that he may prove his worthiness to become king.

Philip rejects his request; he will not give his son power which may be used against himself. Swearing to help the suffering people of Flanders, Carlos draws his sword—an outrage before the king. Despite Philip's call to disarm Carlos, no one steps forward to do it. Then Rodrigo does so; Carlos, astonished, yields his weapon to him, and the king creates Rodrigo a duke in recognition of his service.

The people resume their praises of the king and the monks resume their chant of death. A voice from heaven proclaims future joy for those so cruelly dealt with on earth. The funeral pyre is lit, and all but the condemned deputies sing to the glory of God.

ACT IV

Philip, alone in his apartments, meditates sadly: 'I never had her love' (*Ella giammai m'amò*). The Count of Lerma brings in the aged Grand Inquisitor. Philip asks what punishment should be administered to Carlos, and the Grand Inquisitor advises death, countering Philip's scruples by pointing out that God sacrificed *his* own son. Then the Inquisitor demands that Philip turn Rodrigo over to the Inquisition on the grounds that he is plotting against king and Church. Philip resists, but, before he departs, the Inquisitor warns that the king himself is not above the Inquisition.

Elisabeth enters. Her casket of jewels has been stolen, and she demands justice. Philip produces the casket, ordering her to open it. She refuses: he opens it himself and confronts her with Carlos's portrait which is inside. She faints when he angrily rejects her explanation that she had been betrothed to Carlos. Rodrigo and Princess Eboli come when he calls for help. Now he regrets his hasty conduct, and Eboli, who had given him the casket, regrets her betrayal of the queen. In a quartet, each expresses his reaction to the situation; then, after the men have departed, Eboli begs Elisabeth's forgiveness for her betrayal. She discloses that she herself loves Carlos and has been seduced by the king. Elisabeth orders her to leave the court, either in exile or to enter a convent; left alone, Eboli curses her 'fatal gift' of beauty ('*O don fatale*'), but vows to help rescue Carlos from his threatened punishment.

In Carlos's underground prison, Rodrigo comes to visit him. Rodrigo explains that Carlos's papers have been found in his possession and that he is being hunted by the Inquisition. At that very moment an assassin, under the orders of the Inquisition, enters and shoots him. As he dies he tells Carlos that the queen will meet him the next day, and he charges him to bring freedom to Spain and Flanders: 'O Carlos, now listen' (*O Carlo, ascolta*).

The king, with grantees in attendance, comes to restore his sword to Carlos, but the son denounces his father for complicity in Rodrigo's murder. Outside, an angry crowd is clamouring in support of Carlos. The

Count of Lerma and the grandees are afraid, but Philip demands that the doors be opened. Eboli, in disguise, bids Carlos escape. The Inquisitor appears and orders the tumultuous crowd to kneel in homage before God's chosen king. Overawed, they do so, and beg Philip for mercy.

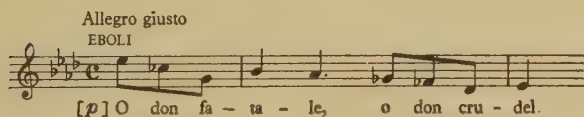
ACT V

Elisabeth, in profoundly sorrowful mood, is alone in the cloisters of Yuste, kneeling before the tomb of the Emperor Charles V, whom she invokes: 'You who know that in vain' (*Tu che le vanità*). She bids her joys a sad farewell, and recalls the happy days of her youth in France. Carlos arrives and they sing a duet, in which they acknowledge that their love can be fulfilled only in heaven.

King Philip enters with the Grand Inquisitor and guards. As the guards move to seize the lovers, the tomb of Charles V opens and a figure in a monk's robe emerges and, to the terrified astonishment of all, takes Carlos away.

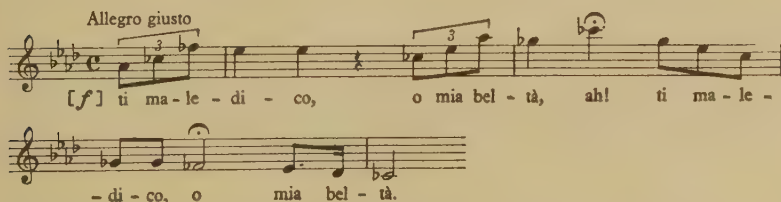
* * *

Musically the opera is remarkable for its mezzo-soprano and bass solo parts, rather than the (usually more prominent) tenor and soprano. Princess Eboli—sharing with Amneris in *Aida* the claim to be considered the most compelling of Verdi's mezzo-soprano roles—has the famous aria in which, remorseful, she curses her 'fatal gift' of beauty ('*O don fatale*'). Here Verdi starts in 4/4 time with a rhythm of ordinary quavers and semi-quavers:



(Ex. 1)

which later gives way to the urgency of triplets and, at the end, after climbing to a testing high note, hammers out strict quavers again:



(Ex. 2)

King Philip may be accounted Verdi's greatest bass part, and his duologue with the blind Grand Inquisitor (two basses, but the king weak in character and the Inquisitor strong) is unique. The measured, pacing orchestral accompaniment is that which served to introduce the Inquisitor just previously. Philip asks whether he should condemn his son to exile or death—and would the Church absolve him if he did? The Inquisitor's firm reply is: 'The peace of your dominions is worth a rebel's dying':

The musical score is for a scene from Verdi's opera *Don Carlos*. It features two vocal parts: Philip (bass) and the Grand Inquisitor (bass), and an orchestral accompaniment. The music is in 3/4 time, with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The tempo is marked 'Largo'.

Philip's Part:

- First line: *[p]* Che fug - ga o che la scu - re
- Second line: *pp* Se il fi - gli - o a mor - te in - vio, m'as - sol - ve la tua
- Third line: *[p]* Eb - ben?
- Fourth line: *mf* La pa - ce dell'im - pe - ro i di' val d'un ri - bel - le.

Grand Inquisitor's Part:

- First line: *[p]* (The Inquisitor's response is not fully transcribed in the image)

Orchestral Part:

- First line: *[p]* (The orchestral accompaniment is not fully transcribed in the image)

(Ex. 3)

This is the 'conversational' musical style of the mature Verdi, dramatically fulfilling the purpose of recitative in older opera.

AIDA

*Libretto by Antonio Ghislanzoni, from a French prose
text by Camille du Locle and A. E. Mariette*

First performed: Cairo, 1871

Four Acts

Cast in order of singing :

Ramfis, high priest of Egypt	<i>bass</i>
Radames, captain of the Egyptian guard	<i>tenor</i>
Amneris, daughter of the King of Egypt	<i>mezzo-soprano</i>
Aida, slave of Amneris and daughter of Amonasro	<i>soprano</i>
The King of Egypt	<i>bass</i>
A messenger	<i>tenor</i>
High priestess	<i>soprano</i>
Amonasro, King of Ethiopia	<i>baritone</i>

Chorus of priests and priestesses, soldiers, Ethiopian
prisoners and slaves, Egyptians

The action is laid in Memphis and Thebes at the time of the Pharaohs

Italian opera began its conquest of the whole world of music in the eighteenth century and consolidated it in the nineteenth. In November 1869 an Italian theatre was opened in Cairo, and *Aida* was commissioned for it by the Khedive (ruler) of Egypt and produced there two years later. (The original plan had been for an opera to celebrate the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869.) The plot had been provided by the French Egyptologist Mariette (known as Mariette Bey, for he had received that title from the Egyptian government); the libretto was written in French prose by Camille du Locle and put into Italian verse by Ghislanzoni, with a good deal of direct intervention by the composer himself.

Verdi's *Aida* turned out to be one of the most universally popular of all operas. It has tremendous spectacle, intermingles personal and political plots, and has its major conflict between soprano and mezzo-soprano—features which relate it to *Don Carlos*. In both works, too, the priests are the villains. But musically and dramatically *Aida* is the more compelling, and only in the dances does it show traces of being constrained by superficial theatrical needs. Solos and ensembles of deep personal passion are set off by massive choral effects and great orchestral splendour.

ACT I

The curtain rises on a hall in the royal palace at Memphis, with temples and pyramids visible in the background. The high priest, Ramfis, tells Radames

that the Ethiopians have invaded Egypt, and that the goddess Isis will declare who is to lead the Egyptian armies. Hoping to be the chosen leader, Radames dreams of returning, after a victorious campaign, to Memphis and to Aida, whom he loves. He sings of her: 'Beauteous Aida' (Celeste Aida).¹ Aida, a captive Ethiopian, is a domestic slave to Amneris, the daughter of the Egyptian king. Amneris enters and, seeing his elation, suspects that his ardour is not merely for military glory. Her fears—for she is in love with him herself—are reinforced on Aida's entry. In the ensuing trio she detects the strong feeling between Aida and Radames.

The king then enters, in procession, with Ramfis and various officers. A messenger tells of the devastation of the Egyptian countryside and the threat to the capital, Thebes, from the Ethiopian armies under their king, Amonasro. At mention of this name, Aida exclaims 'My father!' (Mio padre!)—but her exclamation is unheard by the Egyptians, who do not know of her royal birth. The king proclaims that Isis has chosen Radames to command the Egyptian armies. Led by the king, the assembled Egyptians sing a battle chorus, and Amneris exhorts Radames to return victorious: 'So conquer and return!' (Ritorna vincitor!). Left alone, Aida echoes the words with tragic irony; she is torn between loyalty to her father, her country and her people on the one hand, and her love of Radames on the other.

The scene changes to the Temple of Phtha (a god equated in the Italian text with Vulcan, Roman god of fire and the working of metals), where the high priestess, Ramfis and the assembled priests and priestesses present Radames with consecrated arms.

ACT II

Radames has been victorious; and Amneris in her apartment is being attired for the triumphal feast in celebration of the victory. Her Moorish slaves dance for her. Soon Aida enters, and Amneris resolves to find out whether her jealous suspicions are justified. At first she treats Aida with feigned kindness. Then she tells her that Radames has been killed in battle, leading Aida to reveal her love for him. Then Amneris scornfully tells her that he is in fact alive—and how dare a mere slave presume to rival the Egyptian princess herself in love! The women's duet is joined by the battle song heard previously (sung in the distance by the returning warriors). Then Aida, left alone, implores the gods' pity ('Numi, pietà!')

The scene changes to the outside of a temple near Thebes. The king arrives in state. After a chorus of praise and thanksgiving to Isis and the king, a Grand March opens a resplendent procession including soldiers, dancing girls, chariots, banners and idols. At the height of the ceremony

¹ English version by Arthur Jacobs.

Radames enters. The king greets him, orders Amneris to place the victor's crown on his head, and tells Radames that he may ask any boon.

Next the Ethiopian captives arrive, including Amonasro, whom Aida at once recognizes and embraces, with a cry of 'My father' (*Mio padre!*). The Egyptians hear this, but he tells Aida not to disclose to them his real identity. Amonasro tells the Egyptians that the Ethiopian king is dead, and pleads for the lives of the prisoners and slaves; his plea is supported by the Egyptian people and by Radames (who claims this as the boon earlier offered him by the king). The priests and Amneris oppose the plea, but the king consents, retaining as hostages (at Ramfis's insistence) Aida and her father. The king awards Amneris's hand to Radames, to her great delight but to the distress of Aida and Radames himself. The final ensemble expresses the jubilation of the people and the diverse reactions of the individual characters.

ACT III

From a temple of Isis, by the Nile, priests and priestesses are heard chanting. Ramfis enters with Amneris, leading her to the temple to pray for the goddess's blessing on her marriage, which is to take place the next day. Aida arrives for an assignation with Radames, and sings of her sadness at the prospect of never seeing her beloved homeland again: 'O native skies' (*O cieli azzurri*). Suddenly Amonasro appears; he tells her that she could return to her home safely if only she could find out from Radames what route the attacking Egyptian armies were planning to take. At first she recoils from the idea, but in face of her father's bitter contempt and his threatened curses she ultimately agrees.

Amonasro hides as Radames enters. With woman's wile, Aida overcomes his scruples and persuades him to fly with her to Ethiopia. As they depart she pauses to ask him by which route they can avoid the army; he tells her that the army will go through the Gorge of Napata. At this moment Amonasro, having overheard the vital information, steps forward and reveals himself as the Ethiopian king. Radames can hardly comprehend that he has been led into betraying his country. As Aida and Amonasro try to lead him away, Amneris, Ramfis and their guards emerge from the temple; they have witnessed Radames's disclosure and come to arrest him. Amonasro attempts to kill Amneris, but Radames steps between them, and he bids Aida and her father flee while he yields himself to Ramfis.

ACT IV

Amneris is alone in a room in the palace, close to Radames's prison and above the hall of justice where his fate is being decided. She sends for Radames and offers to intercede on his behalf and save his life, on condition that he swears never to see Aida again. He steadfastly refuses and

Amneris, proud and despairing, lets him go to face judgment. In increasing distress she overhears his trial, taking place offstage. He offers no answer to the charges of Ramfis and the priests; he is condemned three times as a traitor ('traditor!') and is sentenced to be buried alive. The priests emerge and in an impassioned outburst Amneris curses them for their blood-thirsty cruelty.

The final scene is a double one—the Temple of Phtha above, a crypt below. As the scene opens, the crypt is being sealed as a living tomb for Radames, who is within. He discovers that Aida had previously concealed herself in the crypt. While, from the distance, the priests and priestesses chant the praises of their god, and Amneris in bitter isolation prays for Radames's eternal peace, Aida sinks into his arms and dies.

* * *

Aida, Radames, Amneris: it is perhaps the most powerful 'triangle' of love in opera, with each character superbly delineated in music. Radames establishes himself at the start with his aria 'Beauteous Aida', with its long sweeping lines which test a tenor's abilities:

Andantino
RADAMÈS

The musical score for Radamès's aria 'Celeste Aida' is written in 6/8 time with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The melody is characterized by long, sweeping lines. The lyrics are: [P] Ce - le - ste A - i - da, — for - ma di - vi - na, — mi - sti - co ser - to di lu - ce e fior.

(Ex. 1)

It ends with an ascent from F to high B flat which Verdi marked '*pianissimo*, dying away'—an effect beyond most tenors, who sing it very loudly instead (and contrive to be applauded for doing so). The scene when Amneris uncovers Aida's love for Radames enshrines a double dramatic

Allegro marziale . . . poco più vivo
AMNERIS

The musical score for Amneris's aria 'e ap-pren-de-ra-i se lot-tar-tu puoi con' is written in 2/4 time with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The score includes parts for Voice, Chorus (with octave lower), and Orchestration (Orch.). The lyrics are: [ff] e ap - pren - de - ra - i se lot - tar tu puoi con. The Voice part features a strong, rhythmic melody with accents. The Chorus and Orchestration parts provide harmonic support.

AIDA

me! [pp] Nu - mi, pie - tà del mio mar - tir,
guer - ra e mor - te allo stra - nier

ppp *f*

(Ex. 2)

contrast—not only between the two women's attitudes, but between their 'private' scene and the festive air of victory outside: the chorus off-stage shouts its cry of death to the invader, while before us Amneris threatens vengeance on Aida and Aida humbly asks pity from the gods (Ex. 2).

Amneris, the 'villain' in her actions towards Aida, is herself trapped when she tries (repenting at last) to make the priests show mercy to Radames. It is a strong dramatic moment, of an almost classical dramatic irony, and Verdi puts into it his most intense writing for mezzo-soprano against the relentless unison of the chorus of priests. The role of Amonasro is also one of great power.

The Grand March is famous, with its sudden key-change:

Allegro maestoso

Orch. [mf] *f*

(Ex. 3)

but is at its most effective when producers observe (as they generally do not) the remark in the score that it represents one group of trumpeters moving away in procession and a new group coming in.

For an oriental subject a composer is faced with the question of whether to include 'oriental' musical effects. Verdi, in the scene in Phtha's temple,

created an admirable stylization using the regular rhythms of 'western' solemnity in the harp accompaniment and the unusual 'oriental' melodic intervals in the high priestess's solo as she invokes the deity:

Andante con moto
HIGH PRIESTESS

Voice [mf] Pos - - - sen - te, pos-sen-te Fihà

Orch. mf

(Ex. 4)

OTELLO

(Othello)

Libretto by Arrigo Boito, after the play by Shakespeare

First performed: Milan, 1887

Four Acts

Cast in order of singing:

Montano, Othello's predecessor as Governor of Cyprus	bass
Cassio, Othello's lieutenant	tenor
Roderigo, a Venetian gentleman	tenor
Iago, Othello's ensign	baritone
Othello, a Moor, general in the Venetian army and Governor of Cyprus	tenor
Desdemona, Othello's wife	soprano
Emilia, Iago's wife and companion to Desdemona	mezzo-soprano
A herald	bass
Lodovico, Venetian ambassador	bass

Chorus of soldiers and sailors, ladies, gentlemen and children
The action is laid at a seaport in Cyprus, at the end
of the fifteenth century

The librettos of Verdi's two last operas were written by Arrigo Boito (1842-1918), who was himself a composer of standing. His opera *Mephistopheles* (in Italian, *Mefistofele*), which was a failure on its first performance in 1868, has since achieved a modest place in the world's opera-houses. As a librettist his standing is even higher: *Otello* and *Falstaff* are sometimes

reckoned the best texts ever written for Italian operas. Certainly they are marvellous abridgments of the original plays. Perhaps the most striking solo in *Otello*, curiously enough, is not from Shakespeare's pen at all: Iago's Creed, 'I believe in a cruel God' (*Credo in un Dio crudel*), which is a creation of Boito's own.

In *Otello* and *Falstaff* the 'static' element of formally separate numbers is almost banished; the onward development of the drama takes precedence. There is no grandeur of spectacle (or parallel grandeur of choruses) comparable with that of, say, *Aida*. But the role of Othello, immensely 'heavy' and difficult for the tenor, and the hardly less difficult role of Iago give the opera an exciting virtuoso element on top of its dramatic tension.

In the following synopsis we have restored Shakespeare's spelling of his hero; in Italian he drops his 'h'. 'Desdemona' is accented in Italian on the second, not third, syllable; and Iago (in Italian also spelt Jago) is pronounced strictly in two syllables, Yah-go.

ACT I

A crowd at the quayside, near the castle which is the Governor's residence, is waiting to greet Othello on his return from the wars. There is a violent storm at sea and the crowd are fearful for the safety of his ship, which Montano and Cassio identify. Iago and Roderigo watch too as the storm abates and the ship makes harbour. Othello steps on to the quay, briefly tells the crowd to rejoice ('*Esultate!*') since the Turks have been defeated, and goes into the castle. After a short chorus of jubilation, it emerges that Roderigo loves Othello's wife, Desdemona, and that Iago hates Othello and is jealous of Cassio, whom Othello has promoted above him.

The people light a fire, singing and dancing round it. Then, while the officers are taking their ease, Iago starts a drinking song—'Then let me the canakin clink' (*Inaffia l'ugola*)¹—makes Cassio gradually drunk, and engineers a quarrel. Provoked by Roderigo, Cassio draws his sword and in the ensuing brawl Montano is hurt. Meanwhile Iago has sent Roderigo for Othello, who soon exercises his authority, making the men lower their swords ('*Abbasso le spade!*') and dismissing Cassio from his service. Thus the first part of Iago's plot—to discredit Cassio—has succeeded.

Desdemona followed Othello out when he came to stop the brawl but she does not speak till the others are gone and she and Othello are left alone. They sing of their love and of their happy memories of the past: 'Dark is the night and silent' (*Già nella notte densa*). As their love-duet ends they return to Othello's castle.

¹ English version by Francis Hueffer (Ricordi).

ACT II

In a hall of the castle, Iago pretends that he wishes to help Cassio regain Othello's favour: he advises him to ask Desdemona, who has great sway over her husband, to intercede on his behalf. As Cassio walks off into the garden, Iago (alone) reveals that it is part of his plot to sow suspicions in Othello's mind about Desdemona and Cassio. He sings his Creed: 'Cruel is he, the god who in his image has fashioned me' (*Credo in un Dio crudel che m'ha creato simile a se*).

Iago watches Cassio and Desdemona in conversation, and, when Othello approaches, mutters, as if to himself, 'This I like not' (*Ciò m'accora*), for Othello to overhear. Then he subtly arouses Othello's jealousy, while pretending to warn him against 'the green-eyed monster'.

A chorus of sailors, women and children serenades Desdemona, who is now in the garden. Witnessing the scene, Othello's doubts of her innocence are shaken; but his suspicions well up again when she asks him to forgive Cassio. His gruff manner leads her to think him unwell, and she moves to place her handkerchief on his forehead. He throws it down roughly. It is picked up by Emilia, who has been attending Desdemona; she yields it to Iago at his request, with some foreboding.

The two women leave. Othello gives way to jealous doubts, and says an anguished farewell to his former peace of mind: 'And now for ever farewell' (*Ora e per sempre addio*). He demands of Iago positive proof of Desdemona's faithlessness. Accordingly Iago relates how, one night recently (*Era la notte*), Cassio talked in his sleep as if making love to Desdemona. He goes on to ask Othello whether Desdemona has a certain spotted handkerchief (*fazzoletto*); Othello says she has one of this description, his own first gift to her; and Iago states that such a one is in Cassio's possession (in fact it is now in Iago's own pocket). For Othello this is the final confirmation of her guilt, and the two men, kneeling, swear vengeance: 'Witness, yonder marble heaven' (*Si, pel ciel marmoreo giuro!*).

ACT III

In the great hall of the castle, a herald announces to Othello that messengers from Venice will shortly arrive. As Desdemona approaches, Iago warns Othello to be watchful, and then leaves him. His conversation with her is calm, with a touch of irony; but when she again asks him to forgive Cassio he does not answer, only asking to see the handkerchief. She says it is at home, and renews her pleas. He answers by accusing her of infidelity, which she strenuously denies. Othello thrusts her away, calling her a strumpet (*cortigiana*). Alone he shows his anguish: 'Heav'n, had it pleased thee' (*Dio, mi potevi scagliar*).

Iago returns, with Cassio following; Othello conceals himself before

Cassio enters. As the two talk, Iago drawing Cassio on the subject of his amorous conquests, Othello tries to overhear, but Iago takes care that he only catches remarks that could apply to Desdemona. Othello expresses his feelings to himself as he sees Cassio produce Desdemona's handkerchief, which Iago had previously had placed in his room.

Trumpet calls announce the arrival of the messengers, headed by Lodovico. Before they arrive, Othello asks Iago to obtain poison to kill Desdemona; Iago advises strangling, and offers his own services for the killing of Cassio. In return for this advice Othello appoints him his lieutenant. The crowd welcomes Othello, and Lodovico enters to hand the message to him.

Still seething with jealousy, and almost striking Desdemona (to the scandal of Lodovico and the others), Othello reads the message aloud. He himself is to be recalled to Venice, and Cassio is to be his successor as governor of Cyprus. In fury, he throws Desdemona to the ground. She pleads with him pathetically, and in a prolonged ensemble all express their reactions to the situation, with Iago secretly jubilant. At the climax, Othello furiously curses his wife. Left alone with Iago, his imagination runs wild and he faints. As the crowd, outside, shout their praises of Othello, the 'Lion of Venice', Iago looks down contemptuously on his inert form—'See here the lion!' (*Ecco il leone!*).

ACT IV

In her bedroom, Desdemona talks sadly with Emilia. Remembering a poor serving-maid of her mother's called Barbara, forsaken by her lover, she sits before the glass and sings Barbara's song—the Willow Song, with its refrain, 'Willow, willow' (*Salce, salce*). As Emilia leaves, Desdemona, full of foreboding, bids her a passionate farewell. Alone, she kneels in prayer ('Ave Maria'), and when she finishes she lies down on the bed.

Othello enters, places his scimitar on the table, looks at her sleeping form, blows out the candle, advances to the bed, draws aside the curtains and gazes at her, then kisses her three times. She stirs. He asks if she has prayed for forgiveness for her sins, and once more accuses her of loving Cassio. She again repeatedly denies it; he tells her that nothing can save her, refuses her a moment for prayer, and stifles her with a pillow.

Emilia enters to tell Othello that Cassio has been attacked by Roderigo but has killed him. With horror, she finds Desdemona dying. She calls for help, and Iago, Cassio, Lodovico and others arrive. Iago's cunning plot is exposed by Emilia and he runs out, pursued by soldiers: then Othello, realizing and repenting his monstrous injustice to Desdemona, stabs himself, kisses her again, and falls dead.

Towards the end of the love-duet concluding the first act comes a memorable recurring phrase as Othello kisses Desdemona with the words 'One kiss!':

DESDEMONA
♩ = 88

O - tel - lo!

OTELLO *pp* un ba - cio un ba - cio

Orch. *pp* *p*

(Ex. 1)

This is poignantly recalled when Othello kisses his sleeping wife just before he kills her, and again when he kisses her dead body, after having realized the truth and stabbed himself, at the very end of the opera. But this remains a special effect: the opera is not built on such 'recollections'.

The characterization of the three leading personages is strong. Othello is a 'heroic' tenor (it is a role whose arduousness *within* the Italian style makes it particularly difficult to cast). Iago's sinister power is conveyed by the striding *fortissimo* octaves in the orchestra before he delivers his Creed; and, equally sinister, the orchestral trills as he begins:

Allegro sostenuto

VOICE IAGO

Cre - do in un Dio cru -

- del che m'ha cre - a - to si - mi - le a sè,

Orch. *ff* *tr*

(Ex. 2)

Note the treatment of the 'octaves' theme as it becomes softer towards the end of the creed, sinking to 'And death's a nothing' (*La morte è il nulla*).

Desdemona's two great set-pieces follow one another in the final act: the Willow Song and the Ave Maria (not the traditional Ave Maria in Latin, by the way). It is preceded by a mysterious orchestral chord-sequence and itself opens on a monotone while the chord-sequence continues. The Italian declamation is exact and English words cannot be precisely fitted to the music. A literal translation is: 'Hail to thee Mary, full of grace, be elect among married and virgin women; let the fruit be blessed (O thou blessed one!) of thy maternal loins, Jesus':

Adagio

DESDEMONA
sotto voce

3 3

Voice

Orch.

pp

A - ve Ma-ria pic-na di

gra - zia e - let - ta fra le spo - se e le ver - gi - ni sei

tu sia be - ne - det - to il frut - to, o be - ne -

- det - ta, di tue ma - ter - ne vis - ce - re, Ge - sù.

(Ex. 3)

Here is the musical language of Verdi's final period at its richest.

FALSTAFF

Libretto by Arrigo Boito, after Shakespeare

First performed: Milan, 1893

Three Acts

Cast in order of singing:

Dr Caius	<i>tenor</i>
Sir John Falstaff	<i>baritone</i>
Bardolph, follower of Falstaff	<i>tenor</i>
Pistol, follower of Falstaff	<i>bass</i>
Mistress Ford (Alice)	<i>soprano</i>
Mistress Page (Meg)	<i>mezzo-soprano</i>
Mistress Quickly	<i>mezzo-soprano</i>
Nannetta, daughter of Ford, in love with Fenton	<i>soprano</i>
Fenton	<i>tenor</i>
Ford	<i>baritone</i>

Chorus of townspeople, servants, etc.

The scene is laid in Windsor in the time of Henry IV

After an unparalleled succession of tragic operas, Verdi finished his operatic career with a comedy. It has a thread of intriguing musical cross-references and a great richness of musical resource, as well as subtle delineation of character. It has enchanting love-music, too; but it is the delineation of Falstaff himself and the web of conspiracy round him that give the opera its chief celebrity.

Boito, having provided one masterly Shakespearian libretto for Verdi in *Otello*, showed equal mastery in this adaptation of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (he also drew on *King Henry IV*, Part I, for Falstaff's 'Honour Monologue'). Shakespeare's plot, too complex as it stands for operatic treatment, is cleverly shortened by the 'telescoping' of certain incidents and by making the young girl in love with Fenton the daughter of Ford, not—as in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and Nicolai's opera of the same title (1849)—the daughter of Page. Page himself does not appear. The Italian name, Nannetta, is retained in the following synopsis, but Bardolph has been reconstituted from the Italianized Bardolfo, and so forth. Dr Caius, in Shakespeare a French physician whose foreign speech is made fun of, is in the opera a silly (but not foreign) pedant, past his youth; and Mistress Quickly is introduced 'on her own', as it were, not as Dr Caius's servant—she is a confidante of Mistress Ford and Mistress Page but not quite their equal.

ACT I

Falstaff is drinking in the Garter Inn; Bardolph (recognizable by his big red nose) and Pistol are in attendance. Dr Caius enters and brushes past the protesting Bardolph, complaining that Falstaff has broken into his house and beaten his servants, and that Bardolph and Pistol made him drunk and robbed him. Falstaff does not deny it, but tells him to keep more sober company—to which Pistol and Bardolph, hustling Caius out, reply 'Amen'.

Falstaff has no money left to pay the innkeeper's bill. He determines to carry on an amorous intrigue with two merry wives of Windsor, Alice Ford and Meg Page, whom he thinks have looked on him favourably, and asks Bardolph and Pistol to take them letters arranging assignations. They decline to act the pander and he entrusts the letters to his page, haranguing Bardolph and Pistol for their new-found scruples: 'What is honour? A word' (*Che è dunque l'onore? una parola*).

In the garden of Ford's house, Meg Page, Alice Ford, Mistress Quickly and Nannetta are together. Comparing notes, Mistress Page and Mistress Ford find that they have received identical love-letters from Falstaff, differing only in the names Alice and Meg. They are amused and slightly indignant about their elderly, corpulent admirer (Alice reads out Falstaff's extravagant phrases in a caricatured voice) and resolve to make a fool of him.

The women, keeping together, retire into the background as Ford enters, followed by four men agitatedly talking to him—Caius, telling him what a rogue Falstaff is; Bardolph and Pistol (chased out by Falstaff) trying to warn him of Falstaff's designs on his wife; and Fenton, Nannetta's suitor. Eventually the women leave and Bardolph tells Ford that Falstaff has already sent a letter of assignation. The men leave too.

Fenton and Nannetta steal some hurried kisses and sing a love-duet, which is momentarily interrupted when the three women return, planning to send Mistress Quickly as a messenger to Falstaff. Finally Fenton joins the men when they return, still discussing plans to deal with the errant knight. A little later the two groups, men and women, again congregate on opposite sides of the stage; only Fenton, singing in large rapturous phrases, is out of the conspiratorial chatter. The men go off first; then the women complete the hatching of their plot, repeat the caricature of Falstaff's extravagant literary phrases, and go off laughing.

ACT II

Back in the Garter Inn, Bardolph and Pistol (now in Ford's pay) present themselves to Falstaff and feign penitence at having angered him earlier. When Bardolph and Pistol have gone, Mistress Quickly enters, with an exaggerated 'Oh, your worship!' (*Reverenza!*); she delivers affectionate

messages from both ladies and tells Falstaff that Alice Ford would welcome a visit between two and three o'clock, when her husband will be out. (Unfortunately, she adds, Meg Page's husband is rarely away!)

No sooner has Falstaff paid her for her trouble and congratulated himself on his good fortune than Bardolph announces another caller, by name 'Fontana' (in Shakespeare, Brook). This is Ford himself, who, in order to find out how things stand between his wife and Falstaff, has come under the pretence of asking for help in pressing his own suit with Mistress Ford. So far, he says, he has failed; offering Falstaff a purse of gold, he asks if the knight could first assail her virtue so as to ease his path. With pleasure, says Falstaff: he himself has an assignation with her between two and three that afternoon, when her jealous fool of a husband will be out. Left alone for a moment, Ford bursts out with rage against his apparently faithless wife and Falstaff: 'A dream? or real life?' (*E sogno? o realtà?*). Sir John returns, dressed up to the nines for his intended seduction, and the two go off together ceremoniously.

In a room in Ford's house, Alice, Meg and (aside) Nannetta are waiting. Mistress Quickly gives a lively account of her interview with Falstaff, with imitations of his words and manner. She tells them that he will be coming in a few minutes' time, between two and three. Nannetta does not join in the others' laughter; she tearfully tells them that she is sad as her father intends her to marry not her beloved Fenton but old Dr Caius. The other ladies tell her not to worry—they will arrange something. Meanwhile, they set about preparing the scene (with such 'props' as a laundry basket and a screen) for Falstaff's arrival. First Alice, then Meg and Nannetta, sing of the 'merry wives of Windsor' (*gaie comari di Windsor*).

With all the others in hiding, Alice plays the lute to herself as she awaits her visitor. He arrives, sings a refrain to her lute, and then converses with her. Falstaff boasts that love is a vocation for him and sings of his gay youth: 'When I was page-boy to the Duke of Norfolk' (*Quando ero paggio*). Suddenly Mistress Quickly comes in, to say that Meg urgently needs to speak to her; so Falstaff is hurried behind a screen and Meg warns Alice that her husband is approaching.

Ford strides up angrily, with Caius and Fenton, Bardolph and Pistol; he accuses his wife and sets about searching the house—emptying the dirty linen from the laundry basket to see if anyone is hidden there before he goes. The agitated Falstaff emerges from behind the screen to find only Meg, tells her he loves her alone and begs her to save him. She and Mistress Quickly stuff him into the basket and fill it with the dirty clothes again. Fenton and Nannetta enter together and, seeing the screen, retire behind it. The other men return, Ford and Caius still ranting angrily and looking in cupboards and up chimneys.

In a moment of silence, a kiss is heard from behind the screen. While

Meg and Mistress Quickly hush the suffocating Falstaff in his basket, Ford gives instructions to his assembled servants for the unmasking of his wife and Falstaff—behind the screen, as he supposes. After a step-by-step advance, in comic style, Ford throws down the screen, and is scarcely less enraged to find his daughter and her lover than he would have been to find his wife and hers. He strides off to renew the search. Alice summons servants to throw the basket of dirty laundry out of the window and laughingly shows Ford and the other men, who have returned, the magnificent spectacle of Falstaff in the Thames outside. A great outburst of laughter from all ends the act.

ACT III

Outside the Garter Inn, Falstaff is not unnaturally in dampened spirits as he grumbles to the landlord. But he perks up: 'Go on, good old John' (Va, vecchio John). Mistress Quickly enters—with her 'Oh, your worship!' (Reverenza!) again—bearing apologies from Alice; at first Falstaff will not listen, but he eventually calms down and, watched from a distance by the concealed Ford, Alice, Meg, Nannetta, Caius and Fenton, he reads out a note from Alice suggesting an assignation at Herne's Oak in Windsor Forest, to which he should come disguised as the fabled 'black huntsman' (cacciatore nero).

Mistress Quickly and Falstaff depart, while Ford and the others discuss plans for the night's revels at Herne's Oak. Alice announces that Nannetta shall be Queen of the Fairies (Regina della Fate), clad in white. As they go off, Ford tells Caius he will make him his son-in-law at the revels: Caius is to come dressed as a monk. Mistress Quickly overhears this, and the women determine to circumvent it. As they go off their voices are heard in the distance. Night begins to fall.

The scene changes to Herne's Oak, by moonlight. Fenton is the first there and is soon joined by Nannetta, Alice, Meg and Mistress Quickly in their various disguises. They bring monk's robes for Fenton, to his mystification, and all hide. As the clock strikes midnight Falstaff arrives, costumed as requested, in nervous mood. Alice emerges and Falstaff starts to make love to her. She mentions that Meg is near by. Suddenly there is a terrified scream from Meg, shouting that witches are coming; Alice, as if frightened, runs off.

Falstaff is utterly petrified by the fairies, elves and other spirits (in fact Alice's friends, later with Bardolph and Pistol, Ford and Caius) who suddenly appear. They are led by Nannetta, who sings the fairies' song, 'From secret caverns and bowers' (Sul fil d'un soffio etesio). They set about Falstaff, rolling him round, pinching him ('Pizzica, pizzica!'), and he is scared out of his wits. Eventually he recognizes Bardolph (by his big red nose), fulminates against him, and asks for respite.

While Mistress Quickly sends Bardolph away to don a new disguise (a white veil), Ford goes up to Falstaff, asking him 'Which of us wears the horns?' (*Il cornuto chi è?*). Falstaff begins to address him as Fontana, but Alice interrupts to introduce him as—her husband. Then Mistress Quickly identifies herself to him too, singing the same phrase as on their previous encounters. Falstaff takes it all in good part.

Ford then suggests the formal betrothal of a loving couple, Dr Caius (a man in monk's disguise steps forward) and the fairy queen; Alice proposes the addition of another pair of lovers, both masked. As the couples unmask it is seen that Caius has pledged his troth with Bardolph!—and Fenton with Nannetta, to the astonishment of Ford (not to mention that of Caius himself). 'Which of us is the dupe?' (*Lo scornato chi è?*), Falstaff asks Ford merrily. All three—Falstaff, Ford and Caius—answers Alice, and she begs Ford to forgive the young lovers. He quickly does so, and, led by Falstaff, the proceedings are brought to a hilarious close: 'All the world's a jest' (*Tutto nel mondo è burla*).

* * *

The music of the young lovers is ardently romantic, fitting for language that speaks of kisses and of love which renews itself like the moon:

Più lento
FENTON

NANNETTA

Voice

[p] Boc-ca ba - cia - ta non per-de ven - tu - ra An-zi rin -

Orch.

pp

- no - va co-me fa la lu - - - - na,

(Ex. 1)

Note that the orchestral tune at bar 6 is the one sung just a moment previously by the lovers.

Memorable too is the exaggerated greeting of Mistress Quickly to Falstaff:

Assai moderato

QUICKLY

VOICE

[*mf*] Re-ve - ren - za! Buon gior - no, buona

Orch.

p

QUICKLY

don - na Rev - er - en - za!

(Ex. 2)

Both these are among the phrases which later recur prominently. Falstaff's own role is marvellously varied—phlegmatic to Caius, angry to Bardolph and Pistol, amorous to Alice. To her he boasts of how nimble a page-boy he used to be:

Allegro con brio

FALSTAFF

[*p*] Quand' e - ro pag - gio del Du - ca del Nor - folk e - ro sot -

- ti - le, sot - ti - le, sot - ti - le,

(Ex. 3)

And it is Falstaff who leads the final ensemble of jollity—a fugue, incidentally:

Allegro brioso

Voices

FALSTAFF

f *pp* 3 3 3 3

[p] Tut-to nel mon-do è bur-la. L'uom è na-to bur-lo-ne, bur-do-ne, bur-

Orch.

ff *p*

FENTON

3

[p] Tut-to nel mon - do è bur - la.

- lo - ne, tut - to è bur - la,

(Ex. 4)

The whole orchestra seems to join in the laughter. With this ebullient ensemble, Verdi wrote the last pages of his last opera.

VI

RICHARD WAGNER

(1813-83)

WE turn now to a composer who was born in the same year as Verdi and who, with him, dominates opera in the nineteenth century: Richard Wagner. From *The Flying Dutchman* (produced in 1843) to *Parsifal* (1882), he produced a succession of works for the stage unmatched in their influence on the international development of opera in particular and music in general. We need not be concerned here with Wagner's earlier operas, *Die Feen* (The Fairies, composed in 1833 but not staged till after the composer's death), *Das Liebesverbot* (The Ban on Love, based on Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*), produced in 1836, and *Rienzi* (based on Bulwer Lytton's once celebrated novel), produced in 1842.

As a conductor himself, Wagner knew the operas of his own time well, including those of Weber, with their evocation of the romantically supernatural, and those of Meyerbeer, in which the drama served to display vocal set-pieces. But his own aim was to portray the human soul with a new force, a force he detected in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. By fitting a symphonic finale with words Beethoven had attached concreteness to a 'pure' musical form. Wagner wished his operas similarly to be 'music fertilized by poetry', not merely poetry set to music.

Already, as we have seen, composers were increasingly tending to intersperse their operas with recurring musical themes, the recurrence serving a dramatic point. But these recurrences hitherto took place only at special, selected moments of the score. Wagner, from *Tristan und Isolde* on, aimed to make such themes the actual stuff from which his musical fabric was woven. The themes do not each simply represent a mere personage (as Prokofiev in *Peter and the Wolf* has a tune for the cat, a tune for the duck and so on): they may represent an emotion, a destiny, an aspect of character, or something equally abstract. What they represent is to be deduced from their dramatic use in the opera: Wagner wrote the music, not the labels for the themes.

Through the use of these themes Wagner writes music which is, in intention, symphonic—and the symphonic 'argument' is mainly carried on in the orchestra, with the voices joining in. The continuity of this

'argument' almost (but not quite) eliminates the division within an act into separate numbers.

In the three works preceding *Tristan und Isolde* Wagner still laid out his score in separate numbers, and still made only a limited, non-symphonic (though considerable) use of recurring themes. Moreover, the orchestral part may still be described as an accompaniment.

Wagner's recurring themes, each bearing a dramatic meaning, are usually called by the name 'leading-motive'—an anglicization of the German *Leitmotiv* (plural *Leitmotive*).

DER FLIEGENDE HOLLÄNDER

(The Flying Dutchman)

Libretto by the composer, after a story by Heinrich Heine

First performed: Dresden, 1843

Three Acts

Cast in order of singing:

Daland, captain of a Norwegian ship	bass
Steersman on Daland's ship	tenor
The 'Flying Dutchman', a Dutch sea-captain	baritone
Mary, Senta's old nurse	contralto
Senta, Daland's daughter	soprano
Erik, a huntsman, betrothed to Senta	tenor

Chorus of Norwegian sailors, Dutch sailors and Norwegian girls
The scene is laid in a Norwegian fishing village
in the eighteenth century

Wagner was his own librettist—and, unlike many composers, a good one. He wrote *The Flying Dutchman* originally as a one-act libretto, and offered it to the director of the Paris Opéra hoping for a commission to complete the music. Instead, the director offered the libretto to other composers and paid Wagner five hundred francs for it—a sum much needed by the almost penniless young German musician, who had been obliged to leave Russia (where he had held a conductor's post in Riga) secretly to escape his creditors. The five hundred francs gave Wagner the leisure to convert *The Flying Dutchman* into a full-length work of his own.

Its story is a strong one—of a man supernaturally doomed to sail the seas until he can earn redemption. The supernatural element links it with the operatic world of Weber; the element of man's redemption through womanly love points to Wagner's later works. The music here is striking

in its evocation of sea, storm and superstition (first of all in the overture)—and no less striking for its sheer tunefulness, as in Senta's Ballad, the Spinning Chorus and other numbers.

ACT I

The stormy overture sets the atmosphere for the opening scene, in which we see a Norwegian ship just anchored, after a violent tempest, in rough seas off the Norwegian coast. Daland, the captain, finds that they are not far from the port where they were intending to put in. Leaving a steersman on watch, he and the sailors go below for some much-needed rest. The steersman tries to keep awake, singing a ballad 'Through the thunder and storm' (Mit Gewitter und Sturm),¹ but eventually succumbs to sleep.

A ghostly ship, with blood-red sails and black masts, approaches. She puts in alongside the other ship, momentarily disturbing the steersman, and in silence the spectral crew make fast. Its captain, the legendary 'Flying Dutchman', comes ashore and sings of the terrible curse upon him. Once, rounding the Cape of Good Hope in a storm, he invoked the Devil's aid, and consequently his fate is to sail unceasingly until the Day of Judgment unless he can find a woman 'faithful unto death'. He is allowed to search for her every seven years, and that time has now come. The crew echo his bitter complaint.

Daland comes on the deck of his own ship and rouses his steersman, who signals the other ship. In reply there is only an eerie silence. Then Daland sees the Dutchman himself. The two captains talk: the Dutchman tells Daland of his wanderings, asking for his friendship and for shelter at Daland's home (which is near by), and offering a magnificent casket of jewels in return. The Dutchman ascertains that Daland has a daughter and begs to be allowed to make her his wife ('Sie sei mein Weib'); to which Daland, though mystified, willingly consents. In a duet, Daland rejoices at the prospect of great riches and the Dutchman at the prospect of finding peace at last. Meanwhile the storm has passed and the steersman reports a favourable south wind ('Süd-wind!'); Daland and his sailors weigh anchor and set sail for their home port, the Dutchman promising to follow as soon as his crew have rested. The Norwegian sailors sing joyfully as their ship moves off.

ACT II

In a room in Daland's house, Senta's friends and Mary, Senta's old nurse, are singing as they sit at their spinning-wheels (Spinning Chorus). Only Senta, Daland's daughter, does not spin: she is preoccupied with a picture hanging on the wall, depicting the Flying Dutchman. Mary reprimands her for her idleness and the others tease her for her interest in

¹ English version by Ernest Newman (Breitkopf & Härtel).

the Dutchman when she has a suitor (Erik, the huntsman). Senta asks Mary to tell the tale of the Dutchman, but the old woman refuses, so Senta herself sings of the curse and the hoped-for redemption (Senta's Ballad).

The other girls join in. Finally Senta is seized with the sudden idea that she could be the one to save the doomed Dutchman, to the horror of all—including Erik, who arrives and has overheard her. He mentions that Daland's ship is arriving, to the delight of all the girls, who are excited at the prospect of seeing their menfolk. Mary reminds them of the domestic preparations now to be made.

The girls and Mary go off, leaving Erik and Senta alone. In a duet he begs her to promise to remain faithful to him, but she only wishes to go to meet her father. She tells Erik of her compassion for the Dutchman: he is deeply troubled and relates to her a dream he has had in which he saw her father lead the Dutchman to her, and saw them embrace and go off together. (She adds an occasional detail, identifying the dream from the picture.) She is now convinced that it is her fate to save the Dutchman, and Erik rushes off in despair.

Alone, Senta gently sings the refrain of her ballad: then the door opens and she sees her father, with the Dutchman himself, standing there. Her eyes remain riveted on the Dutchman as her father greets her. Daland is disconcerted when she does not run to embrace him as usual; then he praises the guest, asking her to receive him kindly and to consider accepting him as her husband. The Dutchman and Senta remain contemplating one another, in silence: Daland, puzzled and none too pleased by their apparent coldness, goes out, leaving them alone.

Senta and the Dutchman, both as if entranced, can hardly believe the fulfilment of their dreams. Their mutual love becomes clear to them both: 'Up from forgotten depths of years' (*Wie aus der Ferne*). When Daland returns he is delighted to find that she has accepted the visitor as her husband-to-be and that he can announce her betrothal at the forthcoming feast.

ACT III

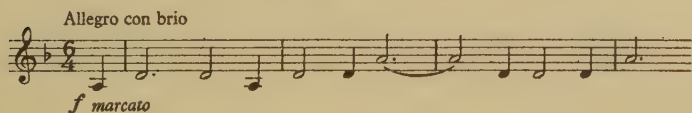
In a bay, overlooked by Daland's house, the two ships are seen—the Dutchman's shrouded by a ghostly stillness, the Norwegian one full of light as the sailors sing and dance lustily: 'Steersman, leave the watch!' (*Steuermann, lass' die Wacht!*). The Norwegian women arrive with food and drink. They go to take some to the silent Dutch ship (the Norwegian steersman attributes their silence to their thirst) but there is no response to the women's calls, which they repeat, louder and louder. Eventually they become afraid, especially when the Norwegian sailors jokingly suggest that the ship resembles that of the legendary Flying Dutchman.

When the Norwegian sailors have eaten and drunk they move towards the Dutch ship. Suddenly a sinister dark blue flame is seen on board: the spectral crew come to life, singing a wild chorus, as the wind whistles and the sea rises round their ship. The Norwegian sailors, mystified and frightened, resume their song. Eventually, suspecting evil, they make the sign of the cross and go below, to the eerie laughter of the Dutchman's crew.

Calm returns just as Senta emerges from the house, followed by the agitated Erik, who reproaches her for her behaviour towards him. He begs her to remember her pledge to him of eternal love—which she recollects with terror. He reminds her of her solemn promises: 'Is that sweet day so soon by thee forgotten?' (Willst jenes Tags). The Dutchman steps forward (Erik recognizes him as the man in his dream): he has overheard their conversation and believes Senta untrue to him. He immediately determines to put to sea once more. As the Dutchman rebukes her for her supposed infidelity, she begs him to stay, while Erik pleads with her to leave the Dutchman to go.

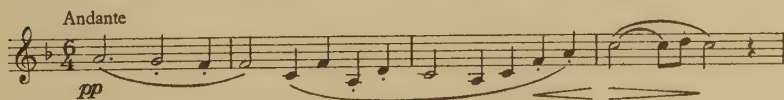
Before he leaves, he starts telling her who he is: she answers that she already knows and intends to save him from the terrible curse. In front of Daland, the Norwegian sailors and the girls (who have hurried out), he proclaims his identity as the dreaded Flying Dutchman. Meanwhile, his crew make preparations to put to sea; he steps on board and they depart. Senta rushes to the edge of a cliff and calls to him, then throws herself into the sea. As she does so, the ship is sucked down into a whirlpool: in the sunset, the forms of Senta and the Flying Dutchman are seen rising heavenward from the sinking wreck.

The storm-tossed Dutchman is portrayed in the opening bars (beneath a string tremolo which is omitted in the following example):



(Ex. 1)

and a little later the redeeming Senta is portrayed:



(Ex. 2)

These two principal motives persist throughout the opera; they both appear (the Dutchman's motive transformed to a peaceful guise) in the very last moments. Senta's theme is first heard vocally in her Ballad (Act I). The overture thus represents (in miniature and in anticipation) what is going to happen; and like the opera itself it ends quietly. The fact that the Dutchman's theme is used both for the appearance of the actual man (Act I) and for the telling of his legend (by Senta in Act II) musically establishes that this *is* the man of the legend: a point which may seem obvious but which in fact illustrates a basic operatic method of communication.

It is notable that the Dutchman's theme is made up of quite 'ordinary' components of rhythm and of melody (two notes only, D and A!); but Wagner stamps his own originality on it. In *The Flying Dutchman* we also sense the more daring harmonic touch which Wagner fully developed in his later works. The Norwegian sailors hail the Dutch ship (in Act III) in a carefree C major; in place of a human answer there comes, after an ominous pause, an 'other-worldly', musically unexpected chord (on the horns and bassoon) in the unrelated key of C sharp minor:

Animato

Chorus

He! Ant-wor-tet doch!

Orch.

ppp Horns

(Ex. 3)

The sequence is shortly repeated twice more, at a different pitch and with slightly different music for the Norwegians, but always with the bleak 'unrelated' minor chord (higher each time) to express the supernatural mystery of the Dutch vessel.

TANNHÄUSER

Libretto by the composer

First produced: Dresden, 1845

Three Acts

Cast in order of singing:

Venus, goddess of love		<i>soprano</i>
Tannhäuser, minstrel and knight		<i>tenor</i>
A shepherd boy		<i>soprano</i>
Hermann, Landgrave of Thuringia		<i>bass</i>
Walther von der Vogelweide	} minstrel knights	<i>tenor</i>
Biterolf		<i>bass</i>
Wolfram von Eschinbach		<i>baritone</i>
Heinrich der Schreiber		<i>tenor</i>
Reinmar von Zweter		<i>bass</i>
Elisabeth, niece of the Landgrave		<i>soprano</i>
Pages		<i>two trebles, two altos</i>

Chorus of sirens, pilgrims, Thuringian nobles, knights
and their ladies

The scene is laid in Thuringia at the beginning of the
thirteenth century

Like *The Flying Dutchman*, *Tannhäuser* has memorable tunes, several of them foreshadowed in the overture which is so well known. Like *The Flying Dutchman* again, it is concerned with redemption—but this time with the conflict of good and bad represented by the roles of the two principal sopranos, who never confront each other on the stage.

Tannhäuser himself was an actual thirteenth-century minstrel ('minnesinger'), some of whose verse survives. Perhaps because of a 'Song of Repentance' attributed to him, in the sixteenth century his name became linked with the legend of the Venusberg—the hill within which Venus was supposed still to hold her court and to destroy the souls of men who fall into her hands. In his opera, Wagner linked this legend with a contest of song which actually took place in 1210 at the Wartburg, a castle in Thuringia (central Germany).

Dramatically, this yields the theme of sacred versus profane love (to which Wagner returned in *Parsifal*), as well as a contest of song with its obvious operatic opportunities (to which the composer returned in *The Mastersingers*)—all against a background of medieval courtly life which exercised a strong attraction for 'romantic' writers and composers of Wagner's day. In the opera, Christian love triumphs over pagan sensuality, but in the older traditional legend Tannhäuser is *not* redeemed and returns to the Venusberg.

Wagner completed *Tannhäuser* in 1845, and later that year it had its first performance—in Dresden, where he held a resident conductor's post. But when the opportunity came to present the work in Paris, in 1861,

Wagner was no longer the Wagner of 1845: he had by now written *Tristan und Isolde*, and accordingly he felt he needed to modify the score of Act I of *Tannhäuser*. In the new version, now known as 'The Paris version' of the score, there are three major changes. The overture does not bring back the opening Pilgrims' Chorus and does not come to a formal close, but merges into the opening music of the Venusberg. The music to the dances in the Venusberg, depicting pagan ecstasy, is expanded¹ with detailed scenic indications to match (for example, 'Numerous sleeping Cupids are huddled together in a confused tangle like children who, tired after play, have fallen asleep'). Venus's plea to Tannhäuser to stay with her is rewritten with greater subtlety of expression—Venus is less shrewish, more meditative.

These modifications do not affect the actual outline of the opera; and the Paris version has not universally banished the earlier (and musically more homogeneous) one from theatrical performances.

ACT I

The opening scene is set within the Venusberg, where the profane rites of love are celebrated to appropriate music. Tannhäuser is resting his head on Venus's lap. He is feeling discontent with the indolent, abandoned life he has led for the past year, and tells Venus so; but she soothes him and asks him to sing to her, which he does: 'All praise be thine' (*Dir töne Lob*).² But he is determined to leave her, despite her repeated seductive pleadings. Eventually she dismisses him, with proud anger, telling him that he can have no hopes of salvation. His hope rests in the Virgin, he replies; Venus and the Venusberg disappear at the mention of her name.

The scene changes suddenly to a valley near the Wartburg, where Tannhäuser finds himself. A shepherd boy is playing on his pipe and singing, and a group of chanting pilgrims moves past. The shepherd wishes them God-speed; then Tannhäuser, deeply moved, falls to his knees and raises his voice in fervent prayer. As the pilgrims finally disappear, the sounds of approaching huntsmen are heard. It is the Landgrave (ruler) of Thuringia with his minstrel knights.

The Landgrave and the knights Walther and Biterolf do not at first recognize Tannhäuser; then another knight, Wolfram, realizes who the stranger is. Wolfram, Walther and Biterolf in turn welcome him. Reinmar and Schreiber join in the greeting, which the Landgrave takes up: they all beg him to return to their company, but Tannhäuser feels that he cannot go back to the past after his transgressions. Only when Wolfram mentions the Landgrave's niece Elisabeth, and tells Tannhäuser that she

¹ In concerts this is known as the Bacchanal or the Venusberg Music.

² English version by Natalia Macfarren (Novello).

loves him (a self-sacrificing disclosure, for Wolfram loves her himself), does he agree to return. They all sing joyfully at the prospect of reunion.

ACT II

Elisabeth, alone in the Minstrels' Hall, sings happily of Tannhäuser's return: 'Oh, hall of song' (*Dich, teure Halle*)—Elisabeth's Greeting. Tannhäuser, led in by Wolfram, throws himself at her feet; she is confused. When she asks about his long absence, he answers vaguely: then the two sing a long love-duet, while Wolfram, in the background, comments briefly on the hopelessness of his own passion for Elisabeth.

Tannhäuser and Wolfram go and the Landgrave enters, greeting his niece. Flourishes of trumpets announce the arrival of the guests for a contest of the minstrel knights. As the nobles and their ladies enter, to the strains of a choral march—'Hail, bright abode' (*Freudig begrüßen wir*)—they are greeted by the Landgrave and Elisabeth: then they raise their voices in praise of song and in praise of the Landgrave. Next the minstrels enter. The Landgrave rises and addresses them, telling them that Love is to be the theme of the song-contest about to take place.

The nobles seat themselves while pages collect slips of paper bearing the minstrels' names, one of which Elisabeth draws from a cup. The first contestant, the pages announce, is Wolfram. He duly rises and, with harp accompaniment, sings a simple, restrained song about the purity of love, hinting at Elisabeth as the source of his inspiration. The assembled company express their approbation. Tannhäuser comments briefly on the more passionate nature of love; then the second contestant, Walther, sings like Wolfram of love's purity.

Now Tannhäuser rises impatiently and startles his audience by singing of the sensual delights of love and its fulfilment. Angrily, Biterolf challenges him to fight, to the approval of the nobles and the other minstrels, who are only more angered by Tannhäuser's answer. The Landgrave and Wolfram restore peace, but no sooner has Wolfram finished than Tannhäuser, carried away, sings his song of impassioned praise to Venus (which was heard in Act I).

All now are scandalized: the ladies rush out in alarm and the minstrels and nobles close on Tannhäuser with their swords drawn, calling curses upon him. But Elisabeth stands in front of Tannhäuser to protect him, and passionately pleads with them to spare him and grant him an opportunity of salvation. In a long ensemble, the outraged company agree to spare him in view of Elisabeth's intercession, though they still consider him accursed, while she continues pleading and Tannhäuser prays to God for forgiveness.

The Landgrave steps forward and pronounces his verdict. Tannhäuser's only prospect of salvation lies in his joining a second party of pilgrims, on

the point of departure for Rome, and seeking absolution from the Pope. All echo his words, threatening Tannhäuser with death if he does not go. The chanting of the pilgrims is heard in the distance, and with a cry of 'To Rome' (Nach Rom!) Tannhäuser rushes off to join them.

ACT III

Elisabeth is seen kneeling before a shrine in the valley by the Wartburg, praying for the absent Tannhäuser's redemption and return. Wolfram watches her, reflecting on her love. The song of the pilgrims, returning at last, is heard. Elisabeth and Wolfram, watching as the pilgrims pass by, see that Tannhäuser is not among them.

Elisabeth kneels again in prayer: 'Oh blessed Virgin' (Allmächt'ge Jungfrau). When she finishes, she moves off, declining Wolfram's offer to accompany her. As night falls, he sings to the accompaniment of his harp, comparing Elisabeth with the bright evening star: 'Oh star of Eve' (O du mein holder Abendstern).

As he finishes, a weary, ragged pilgrim enters. It is Tannhäuser: he is seeking the path to Venusberg. At first he mistrusts Wolfram, whom he takes as his enemy, but Wolfram's kindness moves him. He tells Wolfram of the ordeals he subjected himself to on his pilgrimage, and how he approached the Pope, who had forgiven thousands that day. He was met with a stern refusal: it was as impossible that he should be absolved as that the Pope's barren staff should flower. So now, he explains, he is turning to Venus once more.

As he calls on Venus, visions of her appear and her voice is heard. Wolfram tries to hold Tannhäuser back as she calls to him: as he struggles, Wolfram mentions Elisabeth's name. Tannhäuser, rapt, repeats it—and at this moment voices are heard: Elisabeth has died and her funeral cortège is approaching, attended by the Landgrave, nobles and minstrels. The pagan visions disappear as Venus calls 'I have lost him!' (Mir verloren). Wolfram, telling Tannhäuser that he is absolved as a result of Elisabeth's intercession, signs them to halt and guides Tannhäuser to her bier; he falls beside it and dies. As the new day breaks, the second group of pilgrims arrives, exalted by the news they bear: the Pope's staff has miraculously burst into flower. Tannhäuser is indeed saved. All raise their voices in praise of God.

* * *

Wagner 'tells the story' of the opera in advance in the overture, which is built from motives of the opera—but the 'story-telling' is more obvious in the earlier (Dresden, not Paris) version when the Pilgrims' Chorus, which opened the overture softly, returns to close it loudly: Christianity has triumphed.

Tannhäuser, as a minstrel, apostrophizes Venus in Act I to the accompaniment of his harp and with words beginning (literally) 'Thanks be to thy grace!':

Allegro
TANNHÄUSER

Voice *f*
Dank dei - ner Huld! ge - prei - sen sei dein Lie - ben!

Orch. *f*

This musical score is for Tannhäuser's song 'Dank deiner Huld!'. It is marked 'Allegro' and 'TANNHÄUSER'. The voice part is in G major, 4/4 time, starting with a forte (f) dynamic. The lyrics are 'Dank deiner Huld! gepreisen sei dein Lieben!'. The orchestral accompaniment, also marked 'f', features a harp-like texture with arpeggiated chords in the right hand and a steady eighth-note pattern in the left hand.

(Ex. 1)

This is the air which in English is often called 'O gracious fair', and which recurs—to Tannhäuser's disgrace—in the contest in Act II. Venus herself is musically characterized by all the allurements of the Venusberg music as well as by her own sensuous appeal to Tannhäuser (note its free, 'airy' declamation of the words 'Beloved, come!' with no insistent beat below):

Moderato
VENUS

Voice *p*
Ge - lieb - ter, komm! Sieh dort die Grot - te,

Orch. *pp*
Vlns.

This musical score is for Venus's song 'Geliebter, komm!'. It is marked 'Moderato' and 'VENUS'. The voice part is in G major, 4/4 time, starting with a piano (p) dynamic. The lyrics are 'Geliebter, komm! Sieh dort die Grotte,'. The orchestral accompaniment, marked 'pp', features a lush texture with violins (Vlns.) playing a melodic line and other instruments providing a soft harmonic background.

(Ex. 2)

Elisabeth is characterized with equal clarity. Her great moment of self-revelation (Elisabeth's Greeting, to the hall of song in Act II) has such distinctive phrases as this, as she speaks of the pride in her bosom in recalling Tannhäuser's former triumphs:

Allegro
ELISABETH

Voice
[m] Wie jetzt — mein Bu - sen hoch sich he - bet,

This musical score is for Elisabeth's song 'Wie jetzt mein Busen hoch sich hebt,'. It is marked 'Allegro' and 'ELISABETH'. The voice part is in G major, 4/4 time, starting with a mezzo-forte (m) dynamic. The lyrics are '[m] Wie jetzt — mein Busen hoch sich hebt,'. The score shows the vocal line with a melodic contour that rises and then falls.

(Ex. 3)

The climax of Tannhäuser's part comes in what is often called (in clumsy, mock-German English) the Rome Narration—that is, his account in Act III of his pilgrimage to Rome and his bitter disappointment. As an orchestral counterpoint to Tannhäuser's words about the day breaking in

Rome to the sound of bells, we hear a theme which has already been stated in the prelude to the act, anticipating the narration:

Lento un poco più moto
TANNHÄUSER

Voice

[p] Der Tag brach an, da lau-te-ten die Glock-en,

Orch.

(Ex. 4)

The theme signifies Christian salvation, and Wagner carries it over into *Lohengrin* and *Parsifal* where it is usually called the Grail Motive—on which, see page 164.

Thirty-seven distinct motives have been identified and labelled (according to the emotions or situations they represent) in *Tannhäuser*. Wagner had already advanced considerably towards the total penetration of the drama by recurring motives which is found in his later works.

LOHENGRIN

Libretto by the composer

First performed: Weimar, 1850

Three Acts

Cast in order of singing:

A herald	bass
King Henry I of Germany	bass
Friedrich von Telramund, a noble of Brabant	bass
Elsa, daughter of the late Duke of Brabant	soprano
Lohengrin, knight of the Grail	tenor
Ortrud, a sorceress, wife of Telramund	mezzo-soprano
Four nobles	two tenors, two basses
Four pages	two sopranos, two altos
[The role of Gottfried, Elsa's brother, is silent.]	

Chorus of Saxon and Brabantian nobles and retainers, ladies,
pages, etc.

The scene is laid in Antwerp in the first half of
the tenth century

The romantic, picturesque and dramatic appeal of medieval Christianity furnished Wagner, after *Tannhäuser*, with *Lohengrin*. The opera's famous Bridal Chorus is the one piece of Wagner known to those who do not know Wagner. The first conductor of the opera was Liszt who, as conductor at the court of Weimar (central Germany), was a keen champion of the most vital new music of his day. For the production of *Lohengrin* at his theatre, he spared no expense and sent out to buy a bass clarinet—a recently invented instrument which Wagner's score calls for.

According to medieval legend, the Holy Grail is 'the platter used by our Saviour at the Last Supper, in which Joseph of Arimathea received the Saviour's blood at the cross. . . . Sometimes, the Grail or Sangreal has been erroneously supposed to be the cup or chalice used at the Last Supper' (*Oxford English Dictionary*). Wagner appears to have held this 'erroneous' view. The legendary Knights of the Holy Grail had the Grail in their possession.

With this legendary element Wagner links the historical German king, Henry I ('the Fowler'; ?876–936), who made war on the Hungarians and who, in the opera, is supposed to be visiting Antwerp to raise an army to fight the Hungarian invader. It was only in the twelfth century that Brabant became a duchy, carrying with it the marquissate of Antwerp; Wagner mistakenly (or deliberately?) antedates the dukedom.

ACT I

By the banks of the Scheldt, near Antwerp, a herald calls the people of Brabant to arms. They respond gladly. King Henry explains that before going to war in defence of his kingdom against the Hungarian barbarians, he wishes to resolve the disunion evident in Brabant itself. He calls on Telramund, who is present with his wife Ortrud, to give an account of the dispute.

Telramund tells the king that he was left in charge of the late duke's children when the duke died. One day the son, Gottfried, disappeared when alone with his sister, Elsa; Telramund now accuses Elsa of having killed her brother so as to have the dukedom for herself. Consequently he resigned his previous claim to her hand, marrying Ortrud instead, through whose noble descent he now claims to be ruler of Brabant. The assembled nobles and the king are horrified by his accusation. The king sends for Elsa, determined to find out the truth and pass judgment.

Elsa comes. She can give no clear answer to the king's questions, but she relates a dream, to everyone's mystification, in which a knight in shining armour appeared as her champion: 'Oft when the hours were lonely' (*Einsam in trüben Tagen*).¹ Telramund presses his case further,

¹ English version by Natalia Macfarren (Novello).

and the king and Brabantians are inclined to believe him. The king rules that the matter shall be decided by combat between Telramund and any man who will act as Elsa's champion.

At the king's command the herald, with a flourish of trumpets, calls upon such a man to step forth. Twice the proclamation is read out, but no one comes. Then, as Elsa and her attendant ladies kneel in prayer, the crowd is astonished to see a swan ('Ein Schwan!') appear on the river, drawing a boat in which there is a knight in silver armour. All greet him (except Telramund and Ortrud): he bids farewell to the swan and steps on to the shore. He asks Elsa if he may act as her champion, but imposes the condition that she must never ask him his name or his origin. With absolute trust, she agrees and they pledge mutual love.

Lohengrin (for it is he) steps forward and challenges Telramund, whose friends advise him to withdraw. The herald announces the combat and all call on God to see that justice prevails. The two men fight: Lohengrin defeats Telramund but spares his life. All applaud his success and Elsa, expresses her joy; the only dissident voices are those of Ortrud and Telramund.

ACT II

On the cathedral steps at night, Telramund and Ortrud are musing on their defeat. Sounds of revelry are heard from the palace. Telramund blames his disgrace on the evil machinations of his wife, who is a sorceress. She tells him that the power of the victorious knight can only be overcome if Elsa can be induced to ask about his name and origins, or if he should be wounded. They determine to seek vengeance.

Elsa appears on the balcony of the Kemenate (the women's dwelling), singing of her happiness. Ortrud sends Telramund away and calls to Elsa, bemoaning her own fate—but while Elsa is on her way down (and thus out of earshot) Ortrud exults in the prospect of revenge. Elsa enters and tells Ortrud she forgives her and promises to try to restore her and Telramund to favour; in their duet, Ortrud cunningly sows in Elsa's mind the seeds of doubt about her champion.

They go off and Telramund enters, concealing himself when, as dawn breaks, trumpeters sound the reveille and a summons to the people. The nobles and retainers arrive. A herald announces that Telramund is banished and that the mysterious knight (Lohengrin) shall marry Elsa, become Guardian of Brabant and lead the Brabantians in war. The royal decrees are acclaimed. Four disaffected nobles, Telramund's friends, are displeased at the prospect of following Lohengrin, and Telramund, defying the decree, reveals himself to them. They conceal him.

Four pages announce the arrival of Elsa and a train of ladies. As she is about to enter the cathedral Ortrud intervenes, saying angrily that Elsa

occupies her (Ortrud's) rightful place. She taunts Elsa for not knowing her lover's name. Elsa, astonished, replies that she has entire trust in him, but Ortrud continues to assert that he is a traitor. Lohengrin arrives with the king and comforts Elsa, but now Telramund boldly presents himself. At first all refuse to listen, but Telramund demands of Lohengrin that he disclose his identity, for otherwise he may be suspected of having his origins in evil magic.

Lohengrin contemptuously refuses to answer. Only Elsa can compel him to speak, he says—and he sees that she is deeply troubled. In an ensemble, Ortrud and Telramund rejoice in her doubts, Elsa expresses her wish to know Lohengrin's secret, he prays to heaven to shield her, and the king and people reaffirm their confidence. Telramund speaks for a moment to Elsa against Lohengrin, but Lohengrin draws her away and all enter the cathedral.

ACT III

The scene shows the bridal chamber. To the strains of the wedding march, Elsa is led in by the ladies and Lohengrin by the king and nobles, and the couple are soon left alone together. They sing tenderly of their love: but when Lohengrin calls Elsa by her name she is sad at not being able to answer with his, and asks if she may know it. He begs her not to ask, but she presses him more and more impetuously—saying she foresees the day when the swan will come again and Lohengrin will leave her.

At the climax of her demands, the door is flung open and Telramund enters with his four friends. With a single blow, Lohengrin kills him, and the four nobles kneel before Lohengrin. He tells Elsa that their happiness is over, and summons ladies to lead her into the king's presence, where he will disclose his identity to all.

The scene changes to the banks of the Scheldt, where the king and nobles assemble. It is early morning and they are preparing to march off to war. The four nobles enter bearing Telramund's body, followed by Elsa, in mournful mood, and a train of ladies. Finally Lohengrin enters. He tells the king, to everyone's consternation, that he cannot lead the campaign, and that Elsa has broken the vow she made and has demanded to know his name and origins.

He now discloses his secret: he is a knight of the Holy Grail, by name Lohengrin, son of Parsifal; and now that his secret is known his power has departed and he must return. He reproaches Elsa, who is crushed by the realization of what she has brought upon them. In despair, she begs him not to leave her, and the king and people add their voices to her plea. But Lohengrin cannot stay. He predicts a glorious victory for the German armies; then the swan appears, drawing an empty boat. He greets it: 'My trusty swan' (*Mein lieber Schwan*); then he embraces Elsa in a final

farewell, handing her his sword, horn and ring to give to her brother Gottfried if he should return.

Suddenly Ortrud steps forward in apparent triumph. She tells Elsa that she had transformed Gottfried into a swan, the swan who now serves Lohengrin; if Lohengrin had been able to stay he would have been able to restore him to human form, but now the opportunity is gone. Lohengrin sinks to his knees in prayer. In response, a white dove appears over his boat, the swan sinks and re-emerges as Gottfried, to Ortrud's rage. The Brabantians bow before Gottfried, who will now rule them. The dove draws the boat away, Lohengrin in it. As Elsa sees him go she falls lifeless into her brother's arms.

* * *

Lohengrin is an opera of patriotism and spectacle (the two often go together in the theatre). Wagner asks for twelve trumpets on the stage in the opening and final scenes, as well as those in the orchestra, and in the final scene the noblemen are supposed to arrive on horseback. Musically, however, it is distinguished not by 'big' effects but for its evocation of intimate, lyrical feeling. The overture opens with a suggestion of high, ethereal mystery (the 'divine' mission of Lohengrin):



(Ex. 1)

—and towards the end of the overture a theme rings out from trumpets and trombones to signify the triumph not of Lohengrin's earthly love, but of that divine mission, the mission of the knights of the Holy Grail to which Lohengrin belongs:



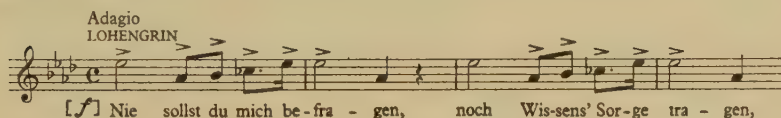
(Ex. 2)

The kinship of this to Ex. 4 on page 160 and Ex. 1a on page 199 will be noted.

When Elsa in the first scene tells of her dream of a knight coming to her rescue it is the 'ethereal' theme which is given to the orchestra, and

Lohengrin on his arrival sings his thanks to the swan to a phrase which evokes this theme. Naturally, the return of the swan in the final act brings a return of the same music.

When Lohengrin first approaches Elsa and declares his love for her he adds a warning not to ask what his name is:



(Ex. 3)

This is usually called the 'Motive of Warning' (or we might retitile it 'Ban on Inquiry'—Wagner's actual musical motives are more precise than any names for them can be). It recurs prominently—with that bass clarinet which Liszt's orchestra had to buy!—when Ortrud tempts Elsa to put the forbidden question to Lohengrin.

TRISTAN UND ISOLDE

Libretto by the composer

First performed: Munich, 1865

Three Acts

Cast in order of singing:

A sailor	<i>tenor</i>
Isolde, an Irish princess	<i>soprano</i>
Brangäne, her attendant	<i>soprano</i>
Kurwenal, Tristan's squire	<i>baritone</i>
Tristan, a Cornish knight, nephew of King Marke	<i>tenor</i>
Melot, a courtier	<i>tenor</i>
King Marke of Cornwall	<i>bass</i>
A shepherd	<i>tenor</i>
A steersman	<i>baritone</i>

Chorus of sailors, knights, attendants, etc.

The scene is laid on a ship near Cornwall, in Cornwall and in Brittany, in legendary times

This is a long opera about love and about almost nothing else: sexual passion is expressed with the full force of Wagner's newly enlarged musical language and the full splendour of his newly enlarged orchestra.

Tristan und Isolde is, moreover, the first of Wagner's new-style operas (he preferred the word 'music-dramas') in which a symphonic texture, an

interplay of leading-motives and a use of 'endless melody' (Wagner's term) replace the old operatic style, and in which there are no formal ensemble numbers. Dramatically, Wagner clung to the domain of legend, but characteristically altered the old story. In the original, Tristan and Isolde's love is purely the result of sorcery—that is, of the magic potion. In Wagner, their mutual love is present from the beginning, and the potion only 'fixes' it and makes it dominant.

ACT I

A young sailor is heard singing on board the ship on which Isolde, with her attendant Brangäne, is being carried from Ireland, lately conquered, to be the bride of the ageing King Marke of Cornwall. His voice arouses Isolde, who in conversation with Brangäne vents her angry grief at her fate. When Isolde asks for air ('Luft!'), Brangäne draws aside the curtains, and a further part of the ship is seen: Tristan, the king's nephew (who has been charged to bring Isolde back), and his squire Kurwenal are there with the sailors.

The voice of the young sailor is again heard. Isolde gazes contemptuously at Tristan; then she orders Brangäne to summon him. Kurwenal warns Tristan of Brangäne's approach. Tristan is unwilling to go to Isolde and Kurwenal, rather insolently, makes his excuses—that Tristan owes no allegiance to an Irishwoman. Tristan is embarrassed, especially when Kurwenal sings loudly (echoed by the crew) as Brangäne goes.

Isolde, alone with Brangäne, is enraged by Tristan's refusal to come. She tells Brangäne how Tristan, wounded in a fight in which he had killed her betrothed, came to her, under the false name of Tantris, and how she overcame her desire for revenge and nursed him back to strength. And now she, Ireland's princess, has to submit to the indignity of being conveyed by the man whose life she saved to be the bride of his elderly monarch. She curses him angrily.

Brangäne tries to comfort her by pointing out that Tristan is bringing her to be a queen. She does not perceive the true cause for Isolde's grief and humiliation—her love for Tristan: when Isolde mentions love, Brangäne thinks she refers to her future husband, and says that the magic potions of Isolde's mother can be used to keep his love alive and strong. Thoughts of such potions lead Isolde to the idea of poisoning herself and Tristan.

Shouts are heard from the sailors: the ship is nearing land. Kurwenal comes to call the women, but Isolde tells him that she will not consent to be led ashore by Tristan unless he first comes to seek her forgiveness. When Kurwenal goes, Isolde tells Brangäne to prepare poisoned drinks for herself and Tristan. Brangäne, horrified, protests vehemently. Kurwenal announces Tristan and retires. Isolde reminds Tristan of the past and how

she saved his life when he had killed her betrothed. He offers her his sword so that she can take revenge now, but instead she suggests that they drink to the end of their strife. She signs to Brangäne to prepare the draught. In the distance, the sailors' voices are heard.

Isolde hands him the drink, still taunting him bitterly. As he takes it he realizes she means to poison them both, and he—in love with her as he is, but having hitherto concealed a love which he knows cannot be fulfilled—drinks willingly. But Brangäne has substituted a love-potion for the poison. They are both instantly overwhelmed by their longing and fall into each other's arms. As the sailors greet King Marke, Brangäne realizes the consequences of what she has done. Tristan and Isolde sing passionately, unaware of what is happening. Brangäne calls to them as the ship reaches land, to shouts from the crew, and Kurwenal tells Tristan that Marke is coming to greet his bride. Brangäne confesses to Isolde that she gave them a love-potion. As the ship berths and people clamber on board, Isolde faints on Tristan's breast.

ACT II

From a garden outside King Marke's castle, overlooked by Isolde's room, sounds of a hunt are heard. It is night, and Isolde, with Brangäne, impatiently awaits Tristan. As the sound of horns fades, Isolde prepares to give Tristan the signal. But Brangäne suspects treachery from a courtier, Melot (who organized the hunting party), and begs her not to be reckless. Isolde sends Brangäne to where she can keep watch, while she signals to Tristan by extinguishing the torch burning on the castle wall.

Tristan comes. In their prolonged duet, they explore their love; they denounce the day (which keeps them apart) and welcome the night. Passionate strains lead to the quieter ecstasy of 'O sink upon us, night of love' (O sink hernieder, Nacht der Liebe). As they embrace, the voice of the watchful Brangäne is heard for a moment in warning. Later, as night is succeeded by day, Brangäne warns them again.

Suddenly Kurwenal enters, calling to Tristan to save himself. At the same time the courtiers, led by Melot and King Marke, arrive, and Brangäne comes from her watching-place. The lovers are discovered. Melot asks Marke if he now thinks his warnings justified. Marke, in a long soliloquy, shows his bitter grief at the faithlessness of his long-trusted friend and nephew.

Tristan asks Isolde if she would follow him to the gloomy land to which he must go. She says that she would. In fury, Melot draws his sword to challenge Tristan; Tristan charges him with duplicity and is about to fight, but then lowers his guard, allowing Melot to wound him. He sinks into Kurwenal's arms and Isolde flings herself on to his breast.

ACT III

Tristan, gravely wounded, has withdrawn to his father's castle in Brittany. A shepherd plays a melancholy strain on his pipe and inquires from the faithful Kurwenal about the health of Tristan, who is sleeping on a couch which has been placed under a lime tree. Tristan stirs and, bewildered, asks Kurwenal where he is: he can remember little except of Isolde, for whom he expresses his great longing. To his delight, Kurwenal promises to have Isolde brought to him.

Tristan expresses his warmth of feeling towards Kurwenal, and excitedly anticipates Isolde's coming. But—as the shepherd's pipe is heard, still on its former strain—no ship is within sight, and he lapses again into melancholy. He goes over the past, then becomes agitated again as he remembers the love-potion. Eventually he falls back, unconscious, but soon revives, still thinking of Isolde's coming and growing agitated once more.

At long last the shepherd's pipe gives out a livelier melody and Kurwenal tells Tristan that it is indeed Isolde's ship. With mounting excitement Tristan, with Kurwenal, watches the ship approach. He sends Kurwenal to bring Isolde. As he waits, Tristan, almost frenzied, tears the bandage from his wound. Isolde enters and he falls into her arms; in a few moments he is dead. After trying to revive him she falls upon his body.

The shepherd comes to tell Kurwenal that a second ship has arrived. Kurwenal, seeing King Marke and Melot, orders his men to prepare to defend the castle, despite the entry of the steersman saying that defence is useless. Brangäne's voice is heard from below, asking for admittance, then Melot's. Kurwenal attacks Melot and kills him, shouts defiance to Marke and fights with Marke's men; he is wounded and dies, falling at Tristan's feet.

Meanwhile Brangäne has entered, climbing over a wall, and is relieved to find Isolde still living. Marke had come with only peaceful intentions (Brangäne had told him about the potions), and is sad and dismayed to find Tristan dead. Isolde, hardly aware of what is happening, raptly sings her lament over Tristan's body: 'Mild and softly' (Mild und leise). At the end she sinks lifeless into Brangäne's arms, over Tristan's body, and Marke silently invokes a benediction over the dead lovers.



There are no more famous bars in the history of music than those which open the prelude of *Tristan und Isolde* (Ex. 1).

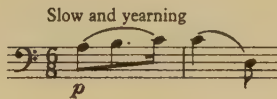
While the historic novelty of the harmony, and the novelty of beginning an opera in this way, may not now concern us, the theme is still arresting in itself and for what Wagner does with it. This is the chief love-motive of

the opera and can be melodically separated into two phrases, as seen in the example below, which have been respectively called 'Avowal' and



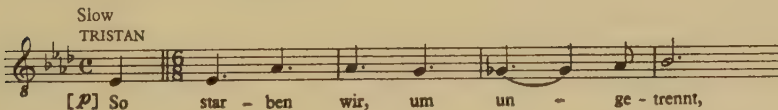
(Ex. 1)

'Desire' (this at any rate seems more plausible than an alternative allocation of the first to Tristan and the second to Isolde). Very shortly follows a motive related to this, and usually called the 'Motive of the Love Glance':



(Ex. 2)

The love-duet in Act II prominently quotes and 'develops' the first of these. Then, at the height of ecstasy, Tristan suggests that this is how they should die, never parting, and his melody announces a new theme, that of Love-as-Death (Liebestod):



(Ex. 3)

In the last act when Tristan is dead and Isolde, over his body, is herself looking forward to death, it is Ex. 3 that she sings to the words beginning 'Mild and softly' (Mild und leise). Hence the word 'Liebestod' has been applied—by Liszt first of all, not by Wagner—to the final pages of the work, accompanying Isolde's death. (It is frequently joined to the end of the prelude in concert performances, often with the voice-part taken over by the orchestra.)

Tristan and Isolde's love-music is by intention concretely erotic: its chromatic sensuousness is tellingly contrasted with the diatonic 'upright', extraverted music of Kurwenal and the sailors in Act I.

The music which the shepherd in Act III plays on his pipe is of a kind never heard before, with its strange intervals and repetitions:



(Ex. 4)

The pipe is simulated in the orchestra by an English horn—until a quicker tune is reached (Isolde's ship is sighted at last!), when, in the modern theatre, the melody is usually taken over by a powerful Hungarian single-reed instrument, the *tárogató*.

DIE MEISTERSINGER VON NÜRNBERG

(The Mastersingers of Nuremberg)

Libretto by the composer

First performed: Munich, 1868

Three Acts

Cast in order of singing:

Walther von Stolzing, a young Franconian knight

tenor

Eva, daughter to Pogner

soprano

Magdalene, Eva's maid

mezzo-soprano

David, apprentice to Hans Sachs

tenor

Veit Pogner, a goldsmith

bass

Sixtus Beckmesser, town clerk

bass

Hans Sachs, a cobbler

bass

Kunz Vogelgesang, a furrier

tenor

Konrad Nachtigall, a tinsmith

bass

Fritz Kothner, a baker

bass

Hermann Ortel, a soap-boiler

bass

Balthasar Zorn, a pewterer

tenor

Augustin Moser, a tailor

tenor

Ulrich Eisslinger, a grocer

tenor

Hans Foltz, a coppersmith

bass

Hans Schwarz, a stocking-weaver

bass

A nightwatchman

bass

Mastersingers

Chorus of apprentices, burghers, girls, etc.

The scene is laid in Nuremberg in the mid-sixteenth century

The Mastersingers (as the title is usually abbreviated) is Wagner's only comic opera—and a most successful one, with real comedy backed by the lyric inspiration of the Prize Song and the springing vigour of the various

choruses. It is an opera about the triumph of real, living art over false, academic art, and Wagner saw the victory of the young knight Walther as representing his own victory over crabbed criticism. Such criticism is represented in the opera by the character of Beckmesser whom, in the original form of the libretto, Wagner named Hans Lick. No wonder that Eduard Hanslick, the bitterly anti-Wagnerian Viennese music critic, walked out of a private reading of the libretto!

Hans Sachs, the central character among the Mastersingers, was a historical personage (1494-1576), a shoemaker and poet. The chorus of acclamation to Sachs in Act III of the opera ('Wach' auf) is in fact a setting of words by the real Sachs. The Mastersingers were, historically, a middle-class type of minstrel as distinct from the aristocratic minstrels (Minnesingers) whom Wagner had already celebrated in *Tannhäuser*. The opera is not without its patriotic appeal: at the end, the triumphant Walther is ready to turn his back on the Mastersingers who originally spurned him, but is persuaded to join them when Sachs puts forward the claim of 'holy German art'.

ACT I

At a service in the church of St. Catherine, at Nuremberg, the final hymn is being sung. The young knight Walther von Stolzing, a visitor to the town, is watching Eva, the daughter of Pogner the goldsmith. As the service ends he approaches her; she contrives to send her maid, Magdalene, away momentarily and he asks if she is betrothed. Magdalene, overhearing as she returns, explains that Eva's hand is to be the prize in a song contest to be held by the Mastersingers the next day. Walther does not fully understand. But presently David (an apprentice, betrothed to Magdalene) comes, with other apprentices, to prepare the scene for a preliminary song trial; and, after Eva and Magdalene have gone, he explains to Walther some of the complexities of the rules of song.

The apprentices, their preparations complete, retire to the back as Pogner enters, with Beckmesser, who is not only town clerk but also himself an aspirant to Eva's hand. Walther greets Pogner, saying he wishes to become a Mastersinger; Pogner welcomes him and introduces him to the other Masters as they enter. Finally Sachs arrives and Kothner calls the roll. When this is done Pogner addresses the Masters—'Now hear!' (Nun hört)¹—announcing that the victor in the next day's contest may claim the hand of Eva, as long as she is willing to accept him. The Masters and apprentices are excited by this and a discussion ensues, Beckmesser demanding strict adherence to the rules of song while Sachs would permit a freer style.

Pogner introduces Walther as a candidate for membership of the guild.

¹ English version by Ernest Newman (Breitkopf & Härtel).

In answer to their questions he says, in his song 'By silent hearth' (*Am stillen Herd*), that his teacher was Walther von der Vogelweide, an ancient Minnesinger, and that he studied 'in nature'. The Masters are unimpressed, but he is allowed to proceed with a song. Beckmesser is appointed marker (to count the faults in his song) and retires into the marker's box with a slate and chalk. Kothner tells Walther some of the rules and Beckmesser calls to him to begin. He sings a song of love: 'So cried the spring' (*So rief der Lenz*). As he sings, noisy scratchings are heard from the marker's box, and before he has finished Beckmesser emerges, his slate completely covered with chalk marks (he has realized that Walther is a rival for Eva's hand and is at pains to discredit him).

The other Masters agree that the song was not in accord with the rules and that Walther should be rejected, but Sachs speaks up for Walther, saying that although his song does not conform to the Masters' rules it is different in kind and demands new rules of its own. He also mentions that Beckmesser is not as disinterested as a marker must be. Beckmesser replies that the cobbler should stick to his last. Sachs tells Walther to continue singing. As he does so, Beckmesser angrily shows his catalogue of faults to the other Masters, who agree that Walther is not qualified to be a Mastersinger (and so cannot enter the contest). The apprentices and David join in the general hubbub. As he finishes, Walther proudly goes off and the meeting breaks up in disorder, Sachs remaining deep in thought as the others disperse.

ACT II

That evening, the apprentices sing of the morrow, St. John's Day—'Johannistag'—as, in the street, they close their masters' shutters. Magdalene comes and learns from David that Walther has failed. The other apprentices are teasing David about Magdalene when Sachs arrives and takes him into the workshop. Pogner and Eva enter, and sit talking on a bench. Before Eva follows her father indoors she learns from Magdalene of Walther's failure.

Sachs emerges from his shop, sends David off and settles down to work out of doors under an elder tree: 'The elder's scent subdues me' (*Was duftet doch der Flieder*)—the 'Fliedermonolog'. Eva comes to seek his advice. Sachs, a widower, is deeply fond of her himself, though he realizes not only that he is far too old but also, by her reaction to his apparently slighting reference to Walther, that she really loves the young knight. As Sachs goes indoors, Eva joins Magdalene, who tells her that Beckmesser is coming to serenade her and tries to lead her indoors. Eva asks Magdalene to take her place at the window, and as Walther arrives she goes to his side. He declares his love for her and tells her of his contempt for the Masters and their rules. They arrange to elope and she goes indoors.

The nightwatchman, sounding his horn, comes past. Sachs has overheard their plan to elope and considers it unwise, so he arranges his light to shine on the street so that they would be seen. Eva comes out in Magdalene's clothes and at that moment Beckmesser arrives, with his lute. Walther and Eva conceal themselves as he prepares to sing his serenade. But before Beckmesser begins Sachs starts a noisy cobbling song. Angrily Beckmesser tries to silence him, especially when he sees a woman (Magdalene, whom he takes for Eva) at the window. Sachs continues tormenting him and Beckmesser gets more and more irritated.

Eventually they agree that Sachs shall act as marker during Beckmesser's serenade, being allowed to sound one hammer-stroke on the shoes for each fault in the singing. Beckmesser's grotesque, misaccentuated serenade brings forth blow after blow from Sachs's hammer, to Beckmesser's fury. He sings louder and louder, bringing all the neighbours to their windows. David sees him serenading Magdalene, whom he recognizes, and comes down with a cudgel and gives him a good beating. Neighbours and others are roused and a general brawl breaks out. In the confusion Walther and Eva try to escape, but Sachs seizes Walther, hands the false Magdalene (really Eva) over to Pogner, who is standing anxiously in his doorway, and pulls Walther into his shop. The nightwatchman's horn is heard and the crowd quickly disperses. When the nightwatchman appears all is peaceful again.

ACT III

Sachs is in his workshop, reading. David enters, in some trepidation after the previous night's doings, but finds his master in benevolent mood. It is St. John's Day (Midsummer Day) which, David realizes with a start, must be his master's name-day [Hans=Johannes=John]. When he goes, Sachs ruminates on human folly: 'Mad! Mad!' (Wahn! Wahn!)—the 'Wahnmonolog'. Walther, who has been staying overnight at Sachs's house, comes in. He tells Sachs of a song revealed to him in a dream and eventually sings it to him: 'Bright in the sunlight' (Morgenlich leuchtend). Sachs, impressed, writes down the words of the two stanzas Walther sings. They go off to prepare themselves for the contest of song.

A moment later Beckmesser enters the shop, looking somewhat the worse for his drubbing the previous night. He notices the manuscript in Sachs's handwriting on the table and, seeing Sachs coming, quickly pockets it. In their ensuing conversation Beckmesser accuses Sachs of trying to discredit him because he is intending to compete himself, producing the song as evidence. Sachs assures him that he is not, saying that he may keep the song and sing it if he wishes to, promising, in answer to Beckmesser's request, that he will not claim its authorship for himself.

Beckmesser departs and Eva enters, on the pretext of an uncomfortable

shoe. Walther comes in and the lovers stare raptly at one another. While Sachs repairs Eva's shoe, Walther bursts into song (producing spontaneously the third, final verse required to give his song complete musical form). In profound gratitude and emotion, Eva falls weeping on Sachs's breast. He passes her to Walther and talks of the sad life of a cobbler. Eva says that she would happily have chosen Sachs as her husband if she were not so much in love with Walther. Magdalene and David come in and Sachs promotes David (with the customary box on the ear) from apprentice to journeyman ('Geselle'). Then all, led by Eva, join in a quintet of happiness: 'Blessed as the dawning' (Selig, wie die Sonne).

As horns and trumpets ring out festively, the scene changes to a meadow outside Nuremberg. Large crowds are gathering, the various guilds of the city marching ceremoniously in with banners flying. The apprentices, festively attired, guide people to their places. The tailors sing a story of Nuremberg which involves comic choral imitation of a goat. There is lively dancing from the journeymen, the apprentices (with them David) and girls. The gathering is completed by the majestic entry of the Mastersingers themselves, heralded by trumpets. Pogner leads in Eva, who is attended by Magdalene and other maidens.

The apprentices call for silence and Sachs steps forward, to be acclaimed by the people: 'Arise, the day is dawning' (Wach' auf!). With some emotion, he announces the terms of the contest. Pogner thanks him. Meanwhile Beckmesser has vainly been trying to memorize the words of the pirated song. (The music was not written down; he must compose his own.) He is the first contestant and Kothner calls on him to sing. He clambers up on to the rostrum, almost falling as he does so, and looking so ludicrous that the crowd begins to titter. Rather uneasily, he plays some chords on his lute and starts. His melody is ridiculously ugly and he confuses Walther's words so hopelessly that they emerge as completely absurd. The Masters and people are astonished. Eventually Beckmesser, having provoked everyone's ridicule, rounds on Sachs, saying that he was the writer of the song. The Masters and people are shocked and demand an explanation. Sachs says that he could not write so fine a song himself and he calls on its true composer.

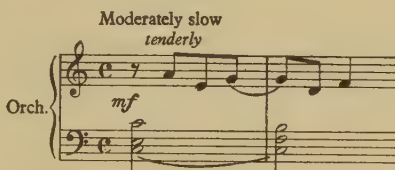
Walther bows to the Masters and steps forward. As he sings his song—the Prize Song—all are struck with its beauty. Though Walther was debarred from the Mastersingers' guild, his is plainly the victory. When he finishes, Eva crowns him with the victor's wreath and they kneel before Pogner, who blesses them. He is about to invest Walther as a Master, but Walther proudly declines. Sachs, however, in an address on the glory of German art, persuades him to accept. Walther accepts the honour from Sachs himself, while Eva takes the wreath from Walther's brow

and places it on Sachs's. The people echo Sachs's words and pay him homage.

* * *

The recurring musical motives in *The Mastersingers* are used with great subtlety—great dramatic subtlety, that is, apart from the musical skill with which so many are combined successively and contrapuntally in the overture.

Hardly has the curtain gone up when, after the first line of the congregational hymn, we hear in the orchestra:

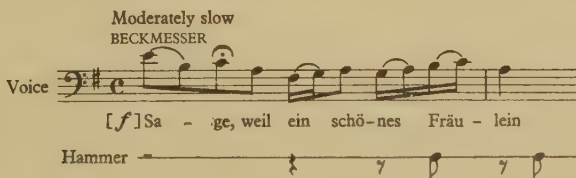


(Ex. 1)

Walther is in church to snatch an opportunity of speaking to Eva, and this melody anticipates the Prize Song which Eva's beauty later inspires in Walther and which, in its turn, wins him Eva as his bride.

There is even a reference by means of motive to Wagner's own *Tristan und Isolde*—in Act III (after Beckmesser has left Sachs's room). Sachs as a widower might well have been a suitor for Eva's hand; but he tells Eva that he well knows the story of Tristan and Isolde and does not wish to have the role of King Marke!

Beckmesser's role has rare comedy *in* music, especially in the scene of his serenade to the disguised Magdalene, whom he takes for Eva. In this serenade, with its absurdly 'decorative' lute accompaniment (usually played in the theatre on a harp with newspaper between the strings!), each false accent committed by Beckmesser is marked by a blow of Sachs's hammer. For instance, the accent should fall on the first syllable of 'schönes' and 'Fräulein' but does not:

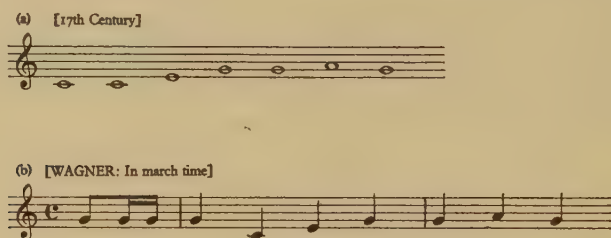


(Ex. 2)

We may wonder indeed how Beckmesser ever came to be made a Mastersinger in the first place!

The lute serves also to emphasize the period atmosphere of the opera, as does the Nightwatchman's Song and the hymn which opens the first

act. In a further deliberate gesture, Wagner also founded two of his principal leading-motives on two old tunes reproduced in a seventeenth-century book. One of these old tunes becomes the march of the Master-singers:



(Ex. 3)

We encounter this in full in the overture and again in the final scene—both times in C major, the key which significantly begins and also ends the opera. In this key too we encounter Walther's Prize Song, both when it is 'composed' (Act III, scene 1) and when it is delivered; and nothing is more magical in it than the orchestral chord of C major which precedes it. The special layout and tone-colour of this chord give it the distinctiveness of a leading-motive in itself!

DER RING DES NIBELUNGEN (The Nibelung's Ring)

In 1848 Wagner completed a libretto for an opera to be called *The Death of Siegfried*. He later decided that three other operas should precede it in performance, dealing with earlier events in the same story. He completed and published the librettos of all four in 1853 and in the same year began working on the music. He finished the last opera in 1874, and the first performance of the complete cycle of four was given in 1876 in the opening season of the new Festival Theatre at Bayreuth (Bavaria)—a theatre built to Wagner's own specification. The two first operas of the cycle had already been given separately at Munich.

The cycle itself Wagner named *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, or *The Nibelung's Ring*. (Only *one* Nibelung in the title, be it noted: it is Alberich.) He described it as 'a theatre festival play for three days and a preliminary evening'. The individual operas are named *Das Rheingold* (The Rhine-gold), *Die Walküre* (The Valkyrie), *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung*¹ (Twilight of the Gods)—the last of these corresponding to the original conception of *The Death of Siegfried*.

The basic material of the story was taken by Wagner from old legend—which appears in German form as an epic poem, the Nibelunglied, and in Scandinavian form in prose, the Volsunga Saga (not identical with the other in detail). Apart from the now standardized English forms Valkyrie and Valhalla (both from the Scandinavian source), Wagner's own German forms of proper names are used, as is customary, in the following pages. The Nibelungs are a race of dwarfs; the story also deals with gods, men and giants.

Theatrically *The Ring* is opera's colossus. The sheer musical planning involved would compel admiration; but we must add to this an amazing psychological skill in the shaping of the actual themes. The result is a work which can have many interpretations on different levels: Bernard Shaw, the self-proclaimed 'Perfect Wagnerite', gave it a Marxist one! The use of myth, though far from new in opera, was intended to give a special and symbolic universality to the drama—a universality which has been seized upon in the style of production associated particularly with post-war Bayreuth.

¹ Not '*Die Götterdämmerung*'.

Wagner made opera not only bigger but more solemn. It was Bayreuth which established the modern convention that the auditorium is darkened during the performance and that late-comers to opera are prevented from taking their seats in mid-act. Opera as an after-dinner diversion is not consistent with a performance of *Das Rheingold*, in one unbroken act lasting more than two-and-a-half-hours.

A continuous development of leading-motives goes right through all the four operas of *The Ring*. In the following pages, therefore, we first of all tell the story itself as it runs through all four, and then discuss some of the musical aspects of the complete work.

DAS RHEINGOLD

(The Rhinegold)

Part I of 'The Ring'

Libretto by the composer

First performed: Munich, 1869

One Act

Cast in order of singing :

Woglinde	} Rhinemaidens	{	soprano
Wellgunde			soprano
Flosshilde			mezzo-soprano
Alberich, a Nibelung			bass-baritone
Fricka, wife of Wotan and goddess of marriage			mezzo-soprano
Wotan, ruler of the gods			bass-baritone
Freia, sister of Fricka and goddess of love and spring			soprano
Fasolt	} giants	{	bass-baritone
Fafner			bass
Froh, god of joy and youth			tenor
Donner, god of thunder			bass-baritone
Loge, god of fire and cunning			tenor
Mime, a Nibelung, Alberich's brother			tenor
Erda, goddess of earth and wisdom			mezzo-soprano

The scene is laid in the Rhine, on a mountain above the Rhine and in the underground caverns of Nibelheim, in legendary times

In the waters of the Rhine, the three Rhinemaidens, Woglinde, Wellgunde and Flosshilde, are playing. Their task is to guard the river's treasure, the Rhinegold. The grotesque dwarf Alberich comes and watches; entranced

by their beauty, he longs to possess one of them. All three in turn tease him cruelly. As he angrily pursues them, his eye is caught by the gleam of the Rhinegold. They tell him of its magic—of how the man who fashions a ring from it, if he renounces love, will become supremely powerful. As the maidens idly play, Alberich, angry and frustrated, moves towards the gold and suddenly snatches it away, to the Rhinemaidens' consternation—uttering the required renunciation, 'Love I now curse for ever!' (So verfluch ich die Liebe).

The waves and rocks disappear into darkness: in their place there appears a splendid castle on a mountain height, with the Rhine visible far below. It is the newly built home of the gods. Outside it Wotan, ruler of the gods, and his wife Fricka are sleeping. As they awake, Wotan contemplates the great castle. Fricka chides Wotan for the promise he made to its builders, the giants Fafner and Fasolt, to give them her sister Freia as their reward. Freia herself enters, asking to be protected from the giants. Wotan is relying on help from Loge, god of fire and cunning, to extricate him from his promise.

The giants come and Fasolt demands their reward. Wotan temporizes. In response to Freia's call for help, two more gods, Froh and Donner, enter. Donner threatens the giants with his hammer while Froh embraces Freia. Then Loge arrives. He admits, to Wotan's anger, that he has found no alternative payment to suggest; but he goes on (deliberately tempting the giants) to tell of the theft by Alberich of the Rhinegold, mentioning that the Rhinemaidens have asked Wotan to help them recover it.

The giants, listening, begin to covet the gold as an alternative to Freia. But Wotan, wishing to have the gold himself, refuses. The giants seize Freia and bear her off as a pledge, giving Wotan until the evening to decide.

Loge watches them depart and turns back to the gods. He is surprised to see them looking aged and weary. Freia, goddess of youth, has left them. Aroused from his lethargy, Wotan decides to go to Nibelheim (the land of the Nibelungs) with Loge. The scene changes as they descend deep into the earth and the banging of anvils is heard as they reach Nibelheim.

In an underground cavern in Nibelheim, Alberich, who now possesses a Ring formed from the gold, is berating his brother Mime. Mime has just forged from the gold a magic helmet, the Tarnhelm, which allows its wearer to take on any form or become invisible. Alberich puts it on, becomes invisible, cruelly beats his brother and goes off, triumphant in his possession of the gold and its power. Wotan and Loge arrive and try unsuccessfully to console Mime. Alberich returns, driving before him more Nibelungs, carrying gold and silver trinkets which they pile up. He brutally sends them back to work, Mime among them.

In the course of a long scene between the two gods and Alberich, Loge

cleverly leads on the dwarf, who boasts of his power and predicts the gods' downfall. Wotan overcomes his anger as he sees Loge's plan working. Alberich tells how he can transform himself into different forms. Loge pretends to doubt him, so he changes himself first into a dragon, then into a toad—when Wotan promptly puts his foot on him. Loge seizes the Tarnhelm. As Alberich returns to human shape they bind him and take him off as their prisoner.

The reverse of the previous scene-change takes place, and we are transported back to the mountain heights where the gods' new castle stands, shrouded in mist. As ransom for Alberich's freedom, Wotan and Loge demand the Rhinegold. Angrily and grudgingly, he agrees. They untie him, as the Nibelungs bring the treasures and pile them up at his command. He asks to be released, but first Loge demands the Tarnhelm, then Wotan the Ring. Defiantly, Alberich refuses to part with the Ring and finally Wotan has to tear it from his finger. Contorted with rage, he curses the Ring and all who shall possess it ('Verflucht sei dieser Ring') before he departs.

The mist clears as Donner, Froh and Fricka enter, and a few moments later Fasolt and Fafner bring in Freia. They refuse to hand her over until the ransom is paid, and Fasolt is so sorry to part with her that he insists that the amount of gold be sufficient to hide her. Wotan agrees, and Loge and Froh pile up the hoard. Fricka and Donner are much grieved at Freia's humiliation. To conceal her hair, visible at the top, the Tarnhelm is added, and, finally, when a crevice in the great pile discloses her eyes, the giants demand the Ring. When Wotan refuses, Fasolt angrily seizes Freia and makes as if to go. All press Wotan to give way. Then Erda, goddess of the earth, wisdom and destiny, appears, and solemnly warns him to part with the cursed Ring.

Wotan eventually decides to do so: Freia is freed, and embraces the other gods joyfully. The giants start sharing out the gold. Fafner demands that he should have the larger share, as it was Fasolt who was particularly willing to resign all the gold for Freia. When it comes to the Ring itself, the two fight and Fasolt is killed. The curse laid on the Ring is already working.

Fafner goes off: Loge ironically congratulates Wotan on having parted with the Ring. As Wotan, deeply troubled, determines to consult Erda, Fricka bids him enter their castle with her. Swinging his hammer, Donner now calls forth a mighty thunderstorm ('Heda, hedo!'); then the clouds disperse, and Donner and Froh are seen at the foot of a dazzling, radiant rainbow bridge stretching across the valley to the castle. After being seized with a new, grand idea, Wotan greets the castle, names it Valhalla (Walhall) and leads Fricka across the rainbow bridge, followed by Froh, Freia and Donner, while Loge stands by and watches them with wry detachment.

From below, the mournful singing of the robbed Rhinemaidens is heard, to Wotan's irritation: the security of mighty Valhalla is threatened by the curse on one small, golden ring.

DIE WALKÜRE

(The Valkyrie)

Part II of 'The Ring'

Libretto by the composer

First performed: Munich, 1870

Three Acts

Cast in order of singing:

Sigmund	} the Wälsungs, twin brother and sister, children	{	<i>tenor</i>
Sieglinde			<i>soprano</i>
Hunding, husband of Sieglinde			<i>bass</i>
Wotan, ruler of the gods			<i>bass-baritone</i>
Brünnhilde, a Valkyrie, daughter of Wotan and the goddess Erda			<i>soprano</i>
Fricka, wife of Wotan and goddess of marriage			<i>mezzo-soprano</i>
Gerhilde	} Valkyries, daughters of Wotan and Erda,	{	<i>sopranos and mezzo-sopranos</i>
Helmwige			
Waltraute			
Schwertleite			
Ortlinde			
Siegrune			
Gringerde			
Rossweisse			

The scene is laid in Hunding's hut, a rocky place, and at the summit of a mountain, in legendary times

Since the events of *Das Rheingold*, Wotan, in union with Erda, has fathered nine warrior-maidens, the Valkyries, whose task is to bring fallen heroes to Valhalla where they can form an army for the gods' defence. Wotan's favourite among these is Brünnhilde. Disguised as a mortal, 'Wälse', he has also fathered twin brother and sister, Sigmund and Sieglinde (known as the Wälsungs), by a mortal mother, in the hope that, as half-gods, his children would help the gods in their struggles against the Nibelungs for the repossession of the Ring.

ACT I

The scene is a forest hut, enclosing the stem of a huge ash tree, belonging

to Hunding and his wife Sieglinde. During a storm, Siegmund enters the hut, exhausted and in flight from his enemies, the Neidings. Finding it empty, he lies down to rest. Sieglinde enters. She sees the stranger and brings him water, pressing him to accept shelter until Hunding returns. The two are strongly attracted to one another.

Hunding enters. Suspicious at finding a stranger in his hut, and noting his resemblance to Sieglinde, he asks his name and story. Siegmund says his name is Wehwalt ('Woeful'), son of Wolfe: he tells his story—of the loss of his mother and twin sister, the pursuit of his father and himself by their enemies, and of his fight to save a woman from a marriage she abhorred, a fight in which he lost his weapons. Hunding realizes that this man is an enemy of his race. He tells Siegmund he may stay overnight but the next morning they must meet in combat. He sends Sieglinde off to the other room, but before she goes she looks meaningfully at a particular spot in the ash tree's trunk. Then Hunding follows her.

Alone in the subdued firelight, Siegmund muses on his position, defenceless in his enemy's home, and in love with his enemy's wife. He recalls his father's promise to provide a sword when he needs it. A shaft of light illuminates the point on the ash stem which Sieglinde had indicated.

As it becomes completely dark, Sieglinde, in night clothes, enters. She has drugged Hunding and comes to warn Siegmund to escape. She relates the story of her wedding-feast, where she sat in sadness as Hunding's kinsmen celebrated, and an old man clad in grey came in and plunged a sword deep into the ash tree; many strong men have tried, without success, to withdraw it. Both Siegmund and she realize that he is the man for whom it was intended. The two feel themselves irresistibly drawn together: they embrace passionately. The door flies open, disclosing the beauty of the night, and Siegmund sings of love and spring: 'Winter storms have waned' (*Winterstürme wichen*). She responds passionately. He tells her that his father's name was really Wälse, and he is a Walsung: they know now that they are brother and sister, and she gives him his true name, Siegmund ('Victory'). He pulls forth the sword, to Sieglinde's delight, calling it Nothung ('Needful'). With renewed ecstasy the lovers again embrace.

ACT II

Siegmund has taken Sieglinde away with him and Hunding is in pursuit. Wotan, wishing to protect Siegmund, his son, has summoned Brünnhilde to the wild, rocky place where he stands. He tells her to support Siegmund against Hunding. She sounds her war-cry ('Ho-jo-to-ho!'), warns Wotan of Fricka's approach, and goes off.

Fricka arrives, in a chariot drawn by two rams. As goddess of marriage, she demands of Wotan that Siegmund be punished by being duly killed

by Hunding. Wotan is unwilling but finally consents: 'Take my oath!' (Nimm' den Eid!)

Brünnhilde's war-cry as she returns has already been heard. Now, as Fricka leaves, she enters. She is distressed to see her father so unhappy. He tells her the story of Alberich and the Ring, of Erda's prediction of the gods' downfall, and the gods' struggle to avert it—through the Valkyries (who will bring an army of heroes to Valhalla) and through Wotan's own half-godly children. But now Siegmund has to die, to satisfy Fricka. In bitter despair, he realizes the inevitability of the gods' downfall. Brünnhilde, appalled, remonstrates with him and begs that Siegmund be allowed to win, as Wotan had at first ordered. But now, with anger, he orders Brünnhilde to ensure Hunding's victory.

Both go off. Shortly Siegmund and Sieglinde enter, in flight; Siegmund is trying to calm the agitated Sieglinde, now full of remorse. In her fevered imagination, she hears the distant sound of horns—she believes that Hunding and his kinsmen, with hounds, are in hot pursuit, and she visualizes the scene of Siegmund's death at their hands. She faints, and Brünnhilde enters.

[Now begins the part of the opera known as the 'Announcement of Death' (Todesverkündigung).] Brünnhilde tells Siegmund that he is to go to Valhalla with her. But when, in reply to his questioning, she says that Sieglinde cannot go with him, he refuses even the honour of Valhalla. She offers to protect Sieglinde and their unborn child after his death, but Siegmund draws his sword: he will kill the sleeping Sieglinde rather than leave her defenceless. Brünnhilde, much moved, stops him, saying that she will, after all, ensure his victory.

Brünnhilde departs. Siegmund bids farewell to the sleeping Sieglinde and goes off to meet Hunding in battle. As she stirs in her sleep, a thunder-storm breaks. In the lightning flashes, Hunding and Siegmund can be seen as they seek one another, shouting their defiance. Soon they meet and fight. Brünnhilde is seen protecting Siegmund with her shield. As Siegmund is about to strike Hunding down, Wotan himself appears, in a red glow; Siegmund's sword shatters on Wotan's spear, and Hunding kills Siegmund. Brünnhilde lifts Sieglinde on to her horse and bears her off, gathering up the broken pieces of the sword. Wotan sadly contemplates Siegmund's body, and, at a wave of his hand, Hunding falls dead. Then, vowing to punish Brünnhilde's disobedience, Wotan disappears.

ACT III

The 'Ride of the Valkyries' is heard. The Valkyries have been carrying the bodies of heroes to Valhalla on their horses, and now they gradually assemble on a mountain peak. They comment that Brünnhilde is missing. Eventually she comes—supporting Sieglinde. They are all horrified to

learn of her defiance of Wotan's command and are unwilling to help her conceal Sieglinde from their father.

Sieglinde revives, and tells them that she does not wish to live, but rallies when she is told that she is to bear Siegmund's child. Brünnhilde sends her eastward, to the forests—Wotan is unlikely to go there, since in that region are the Ring and the rest of the Rhine's treasure, protected by Fafner in his shape as a dragon. Before Sieglinde goes, Brünnhilde gives her the fragments of Siegmund's sword, telling her that her unborn son is to be a great hero, to be called Siegfried; he must reforge the sword, and will be universally victorious.

Wotan arrives, in a fierce storm. The eight Valkyries at first shield Brünnhilde, but she steps forward when he calls on her. In furious rage, he pronounces his sentence. She was his favourite, he says, but she has turned against him. He rejects her completely: she is no longer to be a Valkyrie but an ordinary mortal, to lie in sleep until a man shall awaken her and take her as his wife. The Valkyries, appalled at his severity, beg for leniency, but he refuses to give way and dismisses them, warning them not to help her.

The Valkyries ride off and Brünnhilde is left alone with her father. She begs him to be merciful, pleading that she carried out his true wishes in defending the Wälsung, despite his later command. She tells him of her meeting with Siegmund and mentions the child that Sieglinde is to bear. Wotan remains unmoved and repeats his sentence.

Brünnhilde falls on her knees before him and asks that some great difficulty be placed before anyone wishing to awaken her, so that only a hero dares to venture there. Deeply affected, he agrees to encircle her with fire. They embrace and bid each other a solemn farewell. He closes the visor of her helmet and covers her with her shield. Then he describes a circle round her with his spear, calling on Loge, the god of fire. The ring of fire appears. Wotan proclaims that no one who fears his (Wotan's) spear shall penetrate the fire. With a sorrowful look back at Brünnhilde, Wotan disappears through the flames.

SIEGFRIED

Part III of 'The Ring'

Libretto by the composer

First performed: Bayreuth, 1876

Three Acts

Cast in order of singing :

Mime, a Nibelung, brother of Alberich	<i>tenor</i>
Siegfried, son of Siegmund and Sieglinde	<i>tenor</i>
The Wanderer (Wotan, ruler of the gods, disguised)	<i>bass-baritone</i>
Alberich, a Nibelung	<i>bass-baritone</i>
Fafner, a giant, now in the form of a dragon	<i>bass</i>
The voice of a wood-bird	<i>soprano</i>
Erda, goddess of earth and wisdom	<i>mezzo-soprano</i>
Brünnhilde, formerly a Valkyrie	<i>soprano</i>

The scene is laid in a forest and on a mountain,
in legendary times

In the time that has elapsed since the action of *Die Walküre*, Sieglinde has died in giving birth to Siegfried. The dwarf, Mime, brought up Siegfried in the knowledge that Siegfried would be able to kill Fafner, who obtained possession of the Ring and, to guard it, has assumed the form of a dragon. Mime plans that he will thereupon kill Siegfried and obtain the Ring and the treasure which Fafner now holds.

ACT I

The opening scene takes place in Mime's cavern, where the dwarf is at work forging a sword. No ordinary sword, he reflects, will do for Siegfried, who simply breaks them like toys; only his father's sword, Nothung, will suffice, and Mime is unable to repair the fragments of it which Siegfried's dying mother left behind.

Siegfried enters, driving a bear (to Mime's terror), which he soon dispatches back into the forest. Mime hands Siegfried his newest sword, which Siegfried tries and promptly breaks, expressing his contempt for Mime's work. Mime chides him for his ingratitude, and reminds Siegfried of how he has cared for him. Siegfried only expresses his arrogant loathing of the dwarf.

Siegfried now demands to know who his mother and father were. Mime at first says he is both father and mother to Siegfried; then, when Siegfried threatens to strangle him if he does not reveal the truth, he tells him of Sieglinde and shows Siegfried the fragments of Nothung. Siegfried orders Mime to make a new sword from them, so that he can go away properly armed, and never return to see Mime again. He goes out, leaving Mime to prepare the sword.

Mime tries unsuccessfully to forge the sword. A Wanderer enters (Wotan in disguise). He asks for hospitality, which Mime is unwilling to grant. The Wanderer asks Mime to test his wits with three questions, with

his head as forfeit if he fails. He answers all three correctly—about the Nibelungs, the giants and the gods—then asks Mime to answer three in return, on the same conditions. In fear and trembling, Mime agrees and correctly gives the answer to the first (the race of Wälsungs) and to the second ('Nothung'). For the third question, the Wanderer asks who will repair the sword. The terrified Mime cannot answer, and the Wanderer tells him that the sword can only be mended by one who has never known fear.

The Wanderer goes off—forbearing to claim Mime's life, saying that the 'fearless' one will take it—and a few moments later Siegfried returns, to find Mime hiding. Mime tells him what the Wanderer said and tries to explain, but Siegfried cannot understand: he does not know what 'fear' means. He impatiently decides to remake the sword himself; as he does so, Mime resolves presently to guide Siegfried to Fafner (the dragon), then poison Siegfried when he has killed Fafner and taken the Ring. Siegfried sings his forging song—'Nothung! Nothung!'—and eventually finishes his hammering. Finally, to Mime's terror, with one mighty blow of the refashioned sword he splits the anvil in two.

ACT II

In the wood, outside the cavern which is Fafner's lair, Alberich is keeping watch at night. The Wanderer arrives: Alberich quickly recognizes him as Wotan and treats him with angry contempt, boasting of how, when Fafner dies, he himself (Alberich) will regain the Ring and conquer Valhalla. The Wanderer tells him that a young hero, ignorant of the Ring and the treasure, will soon come and kill Fafner. He wakens Fafner and both tell him of the boy's coming. Wotan goes off and Alberich moves aside to continue his watch.

As morning dawns, Siegfried and Mime arrive—Mime has promised to teach Siegfried what fear is by showing him the dragon. Siegfried is dissatisfied with the lesson and sends Mime off. He sits there musing for a while on Mime and on his mother, then, during an interlude (the Forest Murmurs), listens with growing enchantment to the sounds of the forest and the songs of the birds. He tries to imitate the bird songs on a reed, then lifts his silver horn and sounds a long call. It rouses Fafner, the dragon. Siegfried defies him. They fight and Siegfried kills Fafner, who before dying warns him against Mime.

As Siegfried removes his sword, he is burnt by the dragon's blood and automatically puts his hand to his mouth. This gives him the power to understand bird-song, and he hears the voice of a wood-bird tell of the hoard of treasure, including the Tarnhelm and Ring, within the cave. Mime and Alberich arrive as he goes into the cave, quarrelling over the treasure. They hide as Siegfried comes out, with the Tarnhelm and Ring.

Again he hears the bird's voice, this time warning him of Mime's treachery. Just then Mime approaches, thinking to entrap Siegfried. But the dragon's blood enables Siegfried to hear what Mime *thinks*, not what he intends to say. Thus Mime reveals that the drink he now offers Siegfried is poison. Siegfried kills him.

Siegfried now sinks down to rest and thought. He calls again on the bird. This time he is told that a bride, Brünnhilde, awaits him and at present is sleeping on a rock within a circle of fire. In answer to his excited questioning, the bird says that she can be awakened by a man who knows no fear. Siegfried realizes that he is the man, and the bird leads him away towards Brünnhilde. He bears the Tarnhelm and the Ring.

ACT III

At night, in a wild, rocky place, the Wanderer (Wotan) summons the earth-goddess Erda (here also called the Wala), who appears from a deep chasm. She suggests that he consults the Norns (Fates), but he presses her to answer his query—how can the wheel of destiny be halted, and the fall of the gods be averted? Erda mentions Brünnhilde, her child and Wotan's; Wotan recalls her disobedience and punishment. Erda wants only to return to sleep, but Wotan will not let her go. He tells her that he is now resigned to the gods' downfall, and has bequeathed the world to Siegfried who, feeling no greed and happy in love, is immune from the Ring's curse: Siegfried will awaken Brünnhilde and they will redeem the world. He dismisses Erda, who returns underground.

As day dawns, the Wanderer sees Siegfried approaching, led by the bird's voice. He asks Siegfried various questions, about Mime, Fafner, the sword, and how he came to seek the woman encircled by fire. The answers please him. But Siegfried grows impatient with the 'old man' and speaks insolently to him, which annoys Wotan. Eventually, in irritation, Wotan bars the way with his spear. In the gathering darkness, he points up the mountain towards the glow of the fire, telling Siegfried he will be unable to pass through the flames. Both become angrier and when Wotan says that his spear broke the sword previously, when Siegfried's father wielded it, Siegfried is all the more determined. At a single blow, Siegfried shatters Wotan's spear; defeated, Wotan gathers the fragments and goes off.

Siegfried continues on his way up the mountain, as the fire grows increasingly brighter. Fearless, he sounds his horn and plunges into the flames. Soon the flames disappear, for Siegfried has passed through them. Brünnhilde is seen sleeping, in her armour, covered by her shield, wearing her helmet, with her weapons by her. Her horse too is sleeping there. Siegfried is astonished and at first thinks that the 'warrior' is a man. He loosens the helmet and armour, cutting the iron with his sword. When he

realizes it is a woman he is still more amazed and bewildered—he does not know whom to summon for help, and calls on his mother. He thinks the strange emotions and desires he feels are the mysterious ‘fear’, about which he has heard so much.

He calls on the woman to wake, bends over her and kisses her. Slowly Brünnhilde awakens from her long sleep. She hails the sun and light, and is enraptured when she realizes that it is Siegfried who has awakened her. Now Brünnhilde feels many conflicting emotions—joy at awakening, love of Siegfried, nostalgic regret at the loss of her identity as a warrior, shame and even anger at the coming loss of her maidenhood. She even asks him to leave her, untouched: but finally his intense ardour arouses hers, and they embrace passionately.

GÖTTERDÄMMERUNG

(Twilight of the Gods)

Part IV of ‘The Ring’

Libretto by the composer

First performed: Bayreuth, 1876

Prologue and Three Acts

Cast in order of singing:

The Three Norns (Fates)	<i>contralto, mezzo-soprano, soprano</i>	
Brünnhilde	<i>soprano</i>	
Siegfried	<i>tenor</i>	
Gunther, lord of the Gibichungs	<i>baritone</i>	
Hagen, son of Alberich and half-brother to Gunther	<i>bass</i>	
Gutrune, Gunther's sister	<i>soprano</i>	
Waltraute, a Valkyrie	<i>mezzo-soprano</i>	
Alberich, a Nibelung	<i>bass-baritone</i>	
Woglinde	<div><div></div><div><div><div>soprano</div><div>soprano</div><div>mezzo-soprano</div></div></div></div>	
Wellgunde		
Flosshilde		
} Rhinemaidens		

Chorus of Gibich vassals and female attendants

The scene is laid on a rocky mountain, in the Gibichung castle by the Rhine and in a wood by the Rhine, in legendary times

PROLOGUE

At night, by the rock on which Brünnhilde slept, the three Norns are weaving the rope of Fate. They sing of the crumbling of Wotan’s power. The rope breaks. The Norns descend into the earth for ever.

The sun begins to rise and Brünnhilde and Siegfried enter from a cave. They sing of their love. But Siegfried must go in quest of further heroic adventure. As a token of love he gives her the Ring and in return she gives him her horse, Grane. She watches him depart, listening to the sound of his horn fading away in the distance. She is still encircled by the flames—now her defence against any man but Siegfried.

[An orchestral interlude (known as 'Siegfried's Journey down the Rhine') links the Prologue to the next scene.]

ACT I

In the castle of the Gibichungs, on the Rhine, live the half-brothers Hagen (Alberich's son) and Gunther, with Gunther's sister Gutrune. They talk of their plans to enhance the Gibichungs' fame. Hagen wishes that Gunther should marry Brünnhilde and that Gutrune should become Siegfried's wife. Much cunning will be necessary to arrange this, he says, as only Siegfried can penetrate the flames surrounding Brünnhilde; he suggests that a love-potion be administered to Siegfried by Gutrune so that he should forget Brünnhilde. In the distance Siegfried's horn is heard. Soon he arrives and is welcomed into the castle hall. The three men talk of the Nibelungs' hoard, Siegfried mentioning that he has the Tarnhelm and has given the Ring to a woman. Gutrune, who had gone out, returns with a drinking-horn which she gives to Siegfried. He drinks to Brünnhilde but in doing so (the drink contains a love-potion) he conceives a violent passion for Gutrune. She retires again, and Siegfried asks Gunther if he has a wife. He says he has not, for he wishes only to marry Brünnhilde, who is unattainable as he cannot pass the wall of fire: Siegfried has now altogether forgotten Brünnhilde and in exchange for a promise of Gutrune's hand offers to help him. With a solemn ceremony of blood sacrament, they swear eternal brotherhood. Then they go off, in a boat on the Rhine, to bring back Brünnhilde. Gutrune watches them go, delighted that she is to be Siegfried's wife. Hagen too watches, contemplating the prospect of obtaining the Ring, which he, as Alberich's son, thinks of as his heritage.

The scene changes to the rocky mountain (as in the Prologue) where Brünnhilde is fondly contemplating Siegfried's Ring. She is excited to hear the voice of her sister, Waltraute, and greets her affectionately, telling her of her great joy in Siegfried's love. Waltraute, desperate with anxiety over the terrible decline in Wotan's power, has come to ask Brünnhilde to give her the Ring, so that it can be returned to the Rhine, thereby allaying the curse on the gods and the world. But to Brünnhilde the Ring is the symbol of Siegfried's love. She sends her sister away empty-handed.

Darkness falls and the flames round the mountain glow more vividly. Brünnhilde hears Siegfried's horn call and prepares to greet him, but is horrified to see a different man approaching. (It is in fact Siegfried,

wearing the Tarnhelm, and in Gunther's form; his memories of Brünnhilde are entirely erased.) He is a Gibichung, he says, by name Gunther, and he commands her to follow him. She refuses, invoking the Ring's protection. But in a struggle he wrenches it from her finger. Her spirit is now broken. He drives her into the cave, calling on his sword to stand between them during the night, in token of his faith to his blood-brother.

ACT II

At night, outside the Gibichungs' Hall, Alberich comes to the sleeping Hagen. He urges his son to act with cunning so as to defeat their enemies, telling him to help complete the overthrow of the declining gods and to obtain the Ring from Siegfried.

As day dawns, Alberich goes; soon Siegfried arrives and tells Hagen of his success. Hagen calls Gutrune, who questions Siegfried about events on the mountain and greets him as her betrothed. They enter the hall together to prepare for the wedding.

Hagen places a cowhorn to his lips, summoning the Gibich vassals to come at once and bring their weapons. They arrive in force, anticipating danger. But Hagen tells them that the occasion is a wedding party for Gunther and his bride; sacrifices must be made to Froh, Donner and Fricka, and then all can drink and make merry. The vassals are surprised. A boat bearing Gunther and Brünnhilde draws up and the vassals sing in welcome.

Gunther presents his bride to his people and greets Siegfried, who comes from the hall with Gutrune. Brünnhilde sees Siegfried and almost faints. She is bewildered at his failure to recognize her; then bursts out angrily on seeing the Ring (taken from her by Gunther, as she imagines) on Siegfried's hand. Gunther is puzzled and cannot answer; Brünnhilde then accuses Siegfried, who says he obtained it when he killed the dragon. Now Hagen intervenes, saying that Siegfried must have won it by guile, and Brünnhilde, in terrible anguish, charges Siegfried with betraying her. But he, his memory of his love for Brünnhilde completely blotted out by the potion, denies it—his sword, he says, separated them during their night on the mountain. Gunther, Gutrune and the people are much disturbed.

Siegfried, placing his hand on the point of Hagen's spear, and invoking the 'bright weapon' (helle Wehr), takes a solemn oath on the truth of his story; and Brünnhilde, with a like invocation, dedicates the spear to his destruction. The bystanders call the gods as witness. Siegfried nonchalantly advises Gunther to send Brünnhilde to where she can rest, then, taking Gutrune by the arm, he calls on the men to follow him in to the wedding feast.

Brünnhilde, Hagen and Gunther remain. Brünnhilde bewails her

terrible dilemma, with its conflict of love and hate. Hagen approaches and offers to help her. Eventually she discloses that Siegfried's one vulnerable spot is his back. Hagen turns to the downcast Gunther, telling him that only Siegfried's death can purge his shame. Brünnhilde willingly agrees, and all three determine that he shall die. Hagen suggests that the deed be done during a hunting party the next day. The bridal procession emerges from the hall and Gunther and Brünnhilde join it.

ACT III

Near where Siegfried and others are out hunting, the three Rhinemaidens are seen swimming in the river where it passes through a woody and rocky valley. They are lamenting the loss of their gold. Siegfried, separated from the rest of the huntsmen, enters. The Rhinemaidens talk to him teasingly and ask if he will give them his Ring. He refuses, then later offers it to them. They tell him to keep it, saying that its curse will soon be fulfilled on him. Their threats leave him all the more determined to keep the Ring, and they swim off.

Hagen, Gunther and other huntsmen arrive, and a meal is prepared. Hagen asks Siegfried what game he has won: none, he tells them, but he met some 'water birds' who predicted his death. The three men drink, then Hagen asks Siegfried about his understanding of bird-song. In reply, Siegfried tells the story of the sword, his killing of Fafner and his contact with the dragon's blood, his understanding of the birds, his taking of the Tarnhelm and Ring, his killing of Mime. After drinking further from a horn in which Hagen has squeezed the juice of a herb, to revive his memory, he resumes, and begins to recall how he passed through the fire and aroused Brünnhilde. Gunther, astonished, begins to comprehend Siegfried's relationship to Brünnhilde before he arrived at the Gibichungs' castle.

Some ravens, portents of death, fly over. Hagen draws Siegfried's attention to them and as he turns to watch them Hagen plunges his spear into Siegfried's back. Hagen walks slowly off as Gunther and the vassals, horrified, kneel at Siegfried's side. As he lies dying, he recollects his awakening of Brünnhilde and their love. Night falls: Gunther commands the vassals to lift up Siegfried's body, and convey it to its funeral. The procession moves off slowly and solemnly in the moonlight.

Mists rise from the Rhine, obscuring the scene: when they clear we find ourselves once more in the Gibichungs' Hall. Here Gutrune is alone, waiting anxiously for Siegfried to return. Hagen soon comes, and tells her that he has been killed by a boar, to her intense grief. His body is borne in and she falls upon it. Gutrune blames her brother, but Gunther tells her that Hagen was responsible. He defiantly admits it, claiming that he was justified: then he goes on to demand the Ring. Gunther denies his

claim and the two fight; despite the intervention of his vassals, Gunther is killed. Hagen advances to take the Ring off Siegfried's hand; but suddenly the hand raises itself menacingly.

Now Brünnhilde enters, having understood all. As Siegfried's rightful wife, she demands vengeance. Guttrune angrily blames her for what has occurred, but Brünnhilde soon silences her. Brünnhilde orders a great funeral pyre to be prepared for Siegfried. As the men build it and the women decorate it with flowers, she recalls his nobility and purity. Ordering Siegfried's body to be taken to the pyre, she draws the Ring from his finger and places it on her own. With a firebrand in her hand, she sends two ravens (Wotan's messengers) to tell Wotan what has happened and to bid Loge to the burning of Valhalla. She lights the pyre and, mounting Grane, she rides into the flames to join Siegfried.

The flames burn more fiercely. As they threaten to burn the hall itself, the Rhine overflows and quenches them. The three Rhinemaidens are in its waves. Hagen, still coveting the Ring, leaps forward into the flood: he is seized by two of the Rhinemaidens and drawn away beneath the waters while the third joyously holds aloft the Ring. As the three swim merrily, playing with the Ring, the Rhine waters subside, and in the distance a glow of fire appears in the sky. The hall of Valhalla, with the gods all assembled, is seen consumed by flames.

* * *

In the admirable exposition of *The Ring* by Aylmer Buesst¹ no fewer than 112 motives are given. We confine ourselves here to showing *how* a few of them are used.

Certain motives identify *things*. This, in the opening scene of *Das Rheingold*, is one of those which represent the gold itself:

[Moderately slow]
RHINEMAIDENS

Voices *ff* Rhein - gold!

Orch. (part) *ff*

(Ex. 1)

In other cases, musical meaning is extended from a thing to what that thing stands for. When the giants are bickering with the gods over the payment for Valhalla, Wotan quells the quarrel by uttering the command 'Halt, wild one! Nothing through force!' and by brandishing his spear:

¹ *The Nibelung's Ring: a Handbook to Wagner's Opera Cycle*, 1952.

[Slow]
WOTAN

[ff]

Halt, du Wil-der! Nichts durch Ge-walt!

Orch. *ff*
[+ 8ve lower]

(Ex. 2)

Wotan's spear stands for the sanctity of contract and oath; so this motive is also heard, during *Götterdämmerung*, when Siegfried takes an oath of blood-brotherhood with Hagen. Siegfried does this only after having been deceived by Gutrune's love-potion: but an oath remains an oath, so the music of Ex. 2 recurs.

The meaning of Ex. 1, be it noted, was doubly identified—on the stage (we see the Rhinegold glinting at this point) and by the word 'Rheingold!' But the motive of Ex. 2 on its first full appearance is not identified by words, nor is it sung: it is enunciated by trombones. It is none the less identified because we see the spear as Wotan brandishes it, and we learn from Wotan's own conduct to associate his spear with 'contract'. Thus the motive has meaning also in the swearing of blood-brotherhood in *Götterdämmerung*.

Motives may be musically related because their meanings are related. Loge the god of fire enters thus (orchestra only):

Lively

Orch. *p* *cresc.* etc.

(Ex. 3)

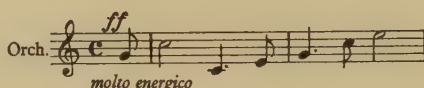
The flickering semiquavers representing 'fire' reappear in the 'Magic Fire' music to which, in *Die Walküre*, Wotan lays Brünnhilde to sleep. First they retain their agitated character; then they are lulled into more restful harmony as the 'sleep motive' (*y*) and another motive representing 'destiny' or 'inevitability' (*x*) are combined with them:

[Moderately slow] *simile*

Orch. *pp* *x* *y*

(Ex. 4)

Sometimes the significance of a motive is deliberately not made clear at first. At the end of *Das Rheingold*, when Wotan—just before leading Fricka to Valhalla—is seized with a grand idea, we hear a trumpet:



(Ex. 5)

Only in *Die Walküre* do we identify this with 'the sword'—the sword which Wotan places in the hands of the Wälsung race he has begotten, and which (in *Siegfried*) shatters even Wotan's own spear.

Similarly at the end of *Die Walküre*, after encircling Brünnhilde with magic fire, Wotan sings that only one who knows no fear shall break through it; and his stirring melody, in Wagner's typical fashion, only half-coincides with the actual motive which the trombone is busy announcing:

[Moderately slow]
WOTAN

(Ex. 6)

This theme is discovered (in *Siegfried*) to represent Siegfried himself, who *is* fearless.

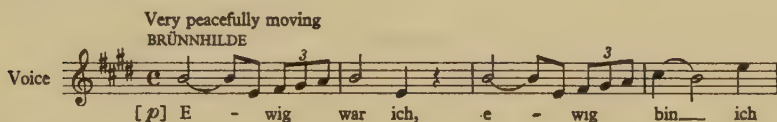
The 'heroine' of *The Ring* is Brünnhilde, even though she does not appear in Wagner's 'preliminary evening' (*Das Rheingold*) at all. We first meet her as a Valkyrie, when she shares the characteristic music of the other Valkyries and utters her war-cry in this famous (and, to the singer, extremely difficult) melody against a tumultuous orchestral accompaniment:

[Lively]
BRÜNNHILDE

(Ex. 7)

When in *Siegfried* she awakens from her magic sleep, now all woman and no longer a Valkyrie, her music is changed. Her themes are new (but

a subdued snatch of the Valkyrie motive, above, comes through in a reminiscence). At first Brünnhilde is ashamed and upset before Siegfried; then a new motive arises which we might call 'Love's Content', to the words 'Eternal was I, eternal am I':



(Ex. 8)

It is a theme familiar from Wagner's separate concert piece, the *Siegfried Idyll*. Its mood is never struck again in the relationship of Siegfried and Brünnhilde. The theme does not recur in *Götterdämmerung*: the non-recurrence of a motive is as significant as its recurrence.

PARSIFAL

Libretto by the composer

First performed: Bayreuth, 1882

Three Acts

Cast in order of singing:

Gurnemanz, a veteran knight of the Grail	bass
A knight of the Grail	bass
Two esquires attendant on the knights of the Grail	soprano, contralto
A knight of the Grail	tenor
Kundry, a sorceress	soprano
Amfortas, ruler of the knights of the Grail	baritone
Third and fourth esquires	two tenors
Parsifal, a youth of unknown origin	tenor
Titurel, former ruler of the knights of the Grail, father of Amfortas	bass
A celestial voice	contralto
Klingsor, a magician	bass
Six flower-maidens	sopranos

Chorus of knights, esquires, youths, flower-maidens

The scene is laid in Spain in the tenth century

We have noted how Lohengrin finally reveals his identity by referring to 'my father Parsifal'. The legend of Parsifal (also spelt Parzival) was set down in the thirteenth century by Wolfram von Eschinbach (a minstrel whom Wagner brought into *Tannhäuser*). There is a connection with yet

a third of Wagner's operas: Wagner originally planned to have Parsifal, in his quest for the Holy Grail, come as a pilgrim to where the dying Tristan lies in the third act of *Tristan und Isolde*. (As Robert L. Jacobs says in his book on Wagner: 'Tristan renounces life for the sake of passion—Parsifal renounces passion for the sake of eternal life.') Parsifal is the 'Percival' of Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* and Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*.

Thus, after the heathen legend of *The Ring*, Wagner turned to the Christian legend of the Grail for his last opera. He called *Parsifal* 'ein Bühnenweihfestspiel', perhaps best translated 'a sacred festival drama'; and something like a Holy Communion is enacted on the stage. Consequently the request is often made of audiences to abstain from applause. This may be logically indefensible (the make-believe rite is not the real rite) but it is the culmination of Wagner's own tendency to make the theatre into a temple. The atmosphere of mystic exaltation is remarkably conveyed in this music.

'Monsalvat' (Mont Salvatge) in Spain is here named as the site of the stronghold of the knights of the Holy Grail, to whose company the 'guileless fool' Parsifal is admitted. Part of Spain at this period was under Arab rule; in that part Wagner places the castle of the knights' antagonist, Klingsor. As to the Grail, see page 161: Wagner uses the word in its erroneous sense of a chalice from the Last Supper, supposing that in the same chalice Christ's blood was collected from the Cross.

ACT I

Reveille sounds in a forest in the domain of the knights of the Holy Grail. Gurnemanz, an aged knight of the Grail, calls his two esquires to prayer, then sets them to work preparing for the arrival of the king of the knights, Amfortas, who is coming to bathe in the nearby lake. Two knights come, one telling him that Amfortas's wound is more painful than ever. The mysterious heathen sorceress Kundry, in a wild, dishevelled state, enters with a phial of balsam for Amfortas, which she gives to Gurnemanz; then she flings herself wearily to the ground.

Amfortas is borne in on a litter, with a train of knights and esquires. He talks with a knight, mentioning the prediction that a 'guileless fool, made wise by pity' (Durch Mitleid wissend . . . der reine Thor) will bring him relief. Gurnemanz hands him the phial from Kundry, whom Amfortas thanks before he goes off. Four esquires talk with Gurnemanz, who tells how the Holy Spear and the Grail (the spear which wounded Christ and the cup used at the Last Supper) were delivered to Titurel, who founded a band of knights to guard them and eventually handed them on to his son, Amfortas.

We learn that Klingsor, a knight who on account of his transgressions

had been refused admittance to the brotherhood, magically created a garden of seductive women to tempt the knights of the Grail. Amfortas succumbed to the charms of one of them, and while he was with her Klingsor stole the Spear and wounded Amfortas's side with it. His wound can never heal, nor the Spear be recovered, except through the agency of 'the guileless fool, made wise by pity'. The esquires repeat Gurnemanz's words.

At that moment a wounded swan flies across the lake—to the horror of the knights and esquires, for animal life is sacred in the domain of the Grail. The swan was shot by a young man, who is brought forward; he is deeply contrite. It is Parsifal; but, to Gurnemanz's question, he cannot even declare his name and origins. After the esquires have taken the body of the swan away, Kundry, who is still present, discloses that Parsifal's father was slain in battle and he was brought up in innocence by his mother, who is now dead (Parsifal is filled with wild rage at this).

Gurnemanz leads Parsifal away and, as the scene changes, they reappear in the great hall of the knights. Bells are heard and knights, esquires and youths are assembling for a sacred feast. Voices are heard from a dome aloft. The aged Titurel bids his son, Amfortas, uncover the Grail. Amfortas, with his burden of guilt and pain, can receive no comfort from the Grail and does not wish to: 'No! leave it unrevealed!' (Nein! lasst ihn unenthüllt!). But eventually at Titurel's command the crystal cup is uncovered; it glows in the darkness; and Amfortas consecrates with it the bread and wine which are then distributed to the knights, who sing in praise of its holy powers of regeneration. The knights and others move off, with Amfortas, whose agony is renewed. Parsifal, who has watched in silence, clutches his own heart and slightly shakes his head. Gurnemanz, irritated at what seems Parsifal's dumb stupidity, sends him off. But from above the words again ring out: 'Made wise by pity, the guileless fool . . .'

ACT II

In his magic castle, Klingsor anticipates the coming of Parsifal to his domain and resolves to trap him by magical means. He summons Kundry from a deep slumber (she is half in his power, half drawn to the knights) and orders her to seduce Parsifal. She is unwilling, but has to agree. Klingsor sounds a horn to alert his own company of defenders against the attack being led by Parsifal.

The tower with Klingsor and Kundry disappears and a magic garden, full of beautiful maidens, appears in its place. Parsifal, who has routed Klingsor's warriors, enters. The maidens angrily reproach Parsifal for killing their friends, but their anger changes to gaiety as he approaches and talks with them. They deck themselves in flowers and dance around him, all competing for his attention and love. He is about to leave when

Kundry, transformed into a beautiful woman, calls to him, and the flower-maidens go off.

Kundry tells Parsifal the story of his mother, who died of grief when he went away; then she tries to console his sorrow with a passionate kiss. As she kisses him, he remembers Amfortas and the wound he received from the Spear. Momentarily he feels Amfortas's pain himself. Kundry is disconcerted as Parsifal, almost in a trance, recalls the sight of the Grail.

As she approaches him again, he realizes what is happening and repulses her. She tries to persuade him to save her, telling him of the terrible curse that has lain upon her since she once reviled Christ himself. Parsifal tells her he can save her, but not in the way she wishes. Becoming more and more frenzied, she begs him to spend one hour in her arms, but he continues to repulse her. Enraged, she curses him and calls Klingsor, who appears on the castle walls overlooking the garden and hurls the sacred Spear at Parsifal. Miraculously, it remains suspended over his head: he grasps it and makes the sign of the cross, whereupon the castle falls in ruins and the magic garden withers and becomes an arid desert. As Parsifal goes off with the Spear he calls to Kundry that she knows where to find him.

ACT III

It is some years later. The aged Gurnemanz is outside his hermit's hut, where he finds Kundry, dressed as a penitent, half-dead in a thicket. He revives her. Her former wildness is gone and she starts to act like a servant to him. She goes into the hut as a man approaches. It is Parsifal, clad in black armour. Gurnemanz does not recognize him, but says that no man must come armed into the domain of the Grail, especially on Good Friday. Parsifal removes his armour and Gurnemanz sees that he was the foolish boy who killed the swan.

Parsifal tells Gurnemanz that owing to a curse (Kundry's) he has hitherto been unable to find his way back, but now he brings the holy Spear. Gurnemanz is thankful, for the knights are in a piteous state: Amfortas refuses to show the Grail, and as a result of that deprivation Titurel has just died. Parsifal is deeply grieved. Kundry and Gurnemanz bathe Parsifal's feet and sprinkle water on his head; he says he is to be their king, as Titurel's true successor, and Gurnemanz anoints him. Then Parsifal baptizes Kundry. He and Gurnemanz gaze with wonderment on the beautiful scene of the Good Friday morning. Bells are heard in the distance: it is midday and Gurnemanz must lead Parsifal, as king, to the knights. They go off, Parsifal bearing the Spear and wearing the mantle of a knight of the Grail.

The scene changes to the great hall of the Grail. Two processions are seen, one with Amfortas and the Grail, the other with Titurel's coffin.

The knights express their woe as the coffin is set down before the altar and Titurel's body is uncovered; the weary Amfortas adds his voice, praying to be released by death. They press him to reveal the Grail, but he refuses animatedly: he is dying, he says, and does not want to be revived. Instead he begs them to kill him.

At that moment Parsifal enters. He holds the Spear to Amfortas's wound, which heals instantly. Amfortas is absolved, he tells the knights, but he, Parsifal, is now their king. All stare, enraptured, at the Spear; then Parsifal commands that the Grail be shown. As before, it glows. Voices are heard from above. As Parsifal silently blesses the assembled company with the Grail, a white dove hovers above his head. All kneel before him, and Kundry, her curse removed, sinks lifeless to the ground.

* * *

The prelude introduces three of the work's prominent motives. First is heard the 'motive of sacrament', which we shall meet when Amfortas (in the second scene of Act I) answers Titurel's request to have the Grail shown.

Then, after a pause, the Prelude goes on to announce two motives in succession:



(Ex. 1)

In this (a) is the motive of the Grail, which we shall meet when Gurnemanz first mentions the Grail to Parsifal and Parsifal ignorantly asks 'Who is the Grail?' Following it, (b) is the motive of Faith, which will be first sung by the boys' voices issuing from above in the second scene of Act I.

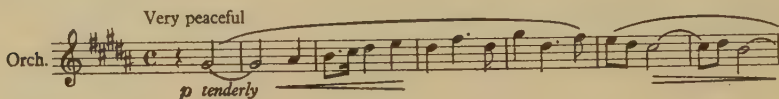
But the motive which prophesies the coming of Parsifal himself is not heard in the Prelude. It is sung by Gurnemanz ('With knowledge gained through pity, the guileless fool') in the opening scene, and repeated by the esquires:



(Ex. 2)

In the last act, after Parsifal has baptized Kundry, a motive which has

already been hinted at comes to the fore. It is the Good Friday Spell motive:



VII

HECTOR BERLIOZ

(1803-69)

ROSSINI (to revert for a moment to page 71) conquered not only Italy but the whole world of European music. In 1823, after visiting London, he took up a musical director's position in Paris—the capital which was then attracting young, enterprising musical geniuses from everywhere, among them Chopin, Liszt and a German known as Giacomo Meyerbeer (1791-1864), whose career reached its climax with the opera *Les Huguenots* (Paris, 1836). It is a pre-eminent example of French 'grand opera'—in five acts, historical in setting, spectacular in action, making full use of chorus and ballet.

Of native French operas of this period, however, none has lasted securely into today's repertory. We may just mention the work of two composers. Great success was won by Daniel Auber (1782-1871) with *La Muette de Portici* (The Dumb Girl of Portici), otherwise *Masaniello* (1828), and with *Fra Diavolo* (1830). Fromental Halévy (1799-1862) created in *La Juive* (The Jewess; 1835) a French 'grand opera' of Meyerbeer's type which enjoyed many revivals, principally because of its tenor role.

Unlike these composers, Hector Berlioz was never in his life a successful composer for the theatre, but today his repute in the general world of music has compelled a reconsideration of his operatic work. He was led to opera both by his musical bent and by his literary enthusiasm. For him, opera at its highest was a means of experiencing psychological dramatic truth: Gluck and Beethoven were his gods. His opera *Benvenuto Cellini* (Paris, 1838) enshrines his idea of the artist as a kind of romantic hero, and in this respect has been called an anticipation of Wagner's *The Mastersingers*. Berlioz's enthusiasm for Shakespeare led him to write an operatic version of *Much Ado About Nothing* which he called *Béatrice et Bénédict* (which, in English, ought to be *Beatrice and Benedick*, reproducing Shakespeare's spelling of the hero's name). It was produced in 1862—not in France, but in Germany, where Liszt (as court musical director at Weimar) had already conducted *Benvenuto Cellini*. Between these two operas Berlioz composed *Les Troyens* (The Trojans), completing it in 1858. Paris mounted only the second part, *The Trojans at Carthage*, in 1863, but the

first part was not given until 1890, when the whole work was produced at Karlsruhe (in Germany, again!).

None of Berlioz's operas, in fact, has become standard in the world's opera-houses at any period from that day to this. But all, today, are thought worthy of the occasional revival. If *Benvenuto Cellini* is dramatically stiff, and if *Beatrice and Benedick* dauntingly asks opera-singers to speak Shakespeare as well as to sing Berlioz, in *Les Troyens* music and drama are splendidly unified.

LES TROYENS

(The Trojans)

Libretto by the composer, after Virgil

First performed complete: Karlsruhe, 1890

Five Acts

Cast in order of singing :

A Trojan soldier	<i>baritone</i>
Cassandra, daughter of Priam	<i>soprano</i>
Choroebus, betrothed to Cassandra	<i>baritone</i>
Aeneas, a Trojan warrior	<i>tenor</i>
Helenus, son of Priam	<i>tenor</i>
Ascanius, son of Aeneas	<i>soprano</i>
Hecuba, wife of Priam	<i>mezzo-soprano</i>
Pantheus, a Trojan priest	<i>bass</i>
Priam, King of Troy	<i>bass</i>
The ghost of Hector	<i>bass</i>
Polyxena, daughter of Priam	<i>soprano</i>
A Greek chieftain	<i>bass</i>
Dido, Queen of Carthage	<i>soprano</i>
Anna, sister of Dido	<i>mezzo-soprano</i>
Iopas, a Carthaginian poet	<i>tenor</i>
Narbal, minister of Dido	<i>bass</i>
Mercury	<i>bass</i>
Hylas, a young Trojan soldier	<i>tenor</i>
[The parts of Andromache and Astyanax (Hector's widow and infant son) are silent.]	

Chorus of Trojans, Greeks, Carthaginians, spirits, nymphs, etc.

The scene is laid in Troy at the end of its siege by
the Greeks, and then in Carthage

Berlioz's gift for tender expression as well as for musical excitement is shown in *The Trojans*. Its huge, fresco-like score still permits fine shading

of personal detail. The opera was dedicated by Berlioz 'divo Vergilio'. (to the divine Virgil). The Roman poet had been a passion of Berlioz's since his boyhood, and he tells of having been moved to tears on hearing of Aeneas's desertion of Dido. He based his own libretto for *Les Troyens* on the original Latin (*Aeneid*, Books II, IV). Note the title of the work. The innumerable eighteenth-century operas on classical subjects nearly all took their titles from the name of a particular hero or heroine; Berlioz instead depicts the story of a nation, the Trojans. The first part is dominated by Cassandra, who dies at the end of it, the second by Dido and Aeneas.

The two parts (*The Capture of Troy* and *The Trojans at Carthage*) were issued at the original publisher's insistence as separate entities, divided into three and four acts respectively. But Berlioz had intended the whole work to be given in a single evening, in five acts, to take about four and a half hours including intervals. This five-act division has been followed here.

The Royal Hunt and Storm, which (usually with the small vocal cries omitted) is so well known in the concert-hall, was placed by Berlioz at the end of Act III; here, as in modern productions generally, it is placed at the end of Act IV. The Trojan March, also familiar in concerts, reproduces the music to which the Greeks' wooden horse is dragged inside the city by the unsuspecting Trojans.

PART I: *The Capture of Troy*

ACT I

On the plain of Troy, a Trojan soldier shows some people the grave of the Greek captain, Achilles. It appears that the Greeks have abandoned the siege of Troy—but left a giant wooden horse behind: the people go to view it, outside the city walls. Cassandra enters and, with her gift of prophecy, foretells the city's doom: her lover Choroebus tries to banish her fears, but in vain.

In front of the Citadel (outside the city proper), the Trojan people give thanks for their deliverance from the Greeks. Andromache, Hector's widow, and her infant son Astyanax enter in the mourning colour of white but speak no word; Cassandra foretells yet more sorrow. Aeneas suddenly enters with dread news: the priest Laocoon, suspecting an ambush in the wooden horse, had thrown a javelin at it, whereupon two sea-serpents had arisen and devoured him. The people are appalled at the portent. King Priam orders the horse to be brought within the city walls.

Cassandra is left alone. In agitation she sings of the impending destruction of the city. The sound of the people joyously dragging in the wooden horse comes nearer. Suddenly the joyous music stops—an ominous clash

of arms has been heard within the horse—but then is resumed. The procession with the horse passes. Cassandra is left alone.

ACT II

Aeneas is asleep in his bedroom; his young son Ascanius, having heard a noise of fighting, runs in terrified, then leaves. The ghost of Hector appears; Aeneas wakes and recognizes him. The ghost bids Aeneas flee from Troy and found a new empire. The priest Pantheus, wounded, enters with the news that the horse contained a Greek ambush and that Priam is dead. Ascanius and Choroebus, entering, add to the tidings. Aeneas and the others rush off to fight.

In the temple of Cybele (the goddess Vesta), the Trojan priestesses and other women, including King Priam's daughter Polyxena, are praying in terror. Cassandra, as chief priestess, rushes in. She tells the others that Aeneas and his men will escape and will found a new Troy; that Choroebus is dead; and that only death can save the women from violation by the triumphant Greeks.

The majority of the women, taking up their lyres, sing heroically and prepare to kill themselves; a smaller group are afraid and are driven out by the others. A Greek chieftain and his soldiers are astonished at the sight of the defiant women. Cassandra stabs herself and hands the dagger to Polyxena; the other women follow their example.

PART 2: *The Trojans at Carthage*

ACT III

Dido and her people, who came to this region seven years ago as refugees from Tyre (and so are sometimes referred to in the text as 'Tyrian'), are holding a festival to celebrate their progress in building the new city of Carthage. The people sing and then greet their queen on her entry: 'Hail, all hail to the queen' (*Gloire, gloire à Didon!*).¹ With her sister Anna and her minister Narbal at her side, Dido addresses the people and tells them that Iarbas, the Numidian king, threatens invasion in order to force her to marriage. The people swear to defend her against him. After a ceremony in honour of the construction of the city, they leave.

Dido is left alone with Anna, who wishes that she would remarry and Carthage acquire a king. Dido swears she must be faithful to the ring she wears, a gift from her dead husband, but (aside) confesses that Anna's plan is attractive to her. Iopas, a poet, enters to tell that a fleet of foreign sailors has been driven on to their shores; Dido sends him to bring them and, while waiting, expresses a strange apprehension. The foreigners are brought in; they are the Trojans. Aeneas, their leader, is disguised. His

¹ English version by Edward J. Dent (O.U.P.).

young son Ascanius presents Dido with ceremonial gifts, supported by Pantheus.

Narbal rushes in with news that the Numidians have invaded; Aeneas throws off his disguise and promises to lead the defence of Dido's realm, leaving Ascanius to her care. The Carthaginians rally to him and prepare to fight.

ACT IV

Aeneas has been victorious. Anna is in conversation with Narbal, who expresses anxiety because Dido is neglecting all else for Aeneas's company—the very thing which delights Anna.

Dido and Aeneas enter with Ascanius, Iopas and attendants. A ballet (with chorus of made-up 'Nubian' words) is performed for them. At Dido's command, Iopas sings. Then Aeneas relates to Dido the fate of Andromache, mentioning that Andromache has now wed the son of the man who slew her first husband, Hector. In that case, Dido thinks, may she herself not think of remarriage? Absently she allows Ascanius to remove her former husband's ring from her finger. Dido and Aeneas hail the beauty of the evening, with Anna, Ascanius, Iopas, Narbal and Pantheus: 'Night throws a veil of enchantment all around' (Tout n'est que paix et charme). Then, left alone, they declare their love: 'On such a night' (Par une telle nuit; the text is modelled on the famous lines in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*). As they depart together they receive a fateful warning: Mercury appears and reminds Aeneas of his appointed destiny—"To Italia!" (Italie!)

[Symphonic entr'acte: Royal Hunt and Storm.] In a forest, naiads swim and a storm is heard; Dido dressed as Diana enters with Aeneas dressed as a warrior, and they take shelter in a cave. Their ecstasy together is visually symbolized by lightning. Fauns and other creatures dance and cry out the fateful message, 'To Italia!'

ACT V

The harbour at Carthage is seen, with the Trojan encampment nearby. A young sailor on board one of the Trojan ships sings with nostalgia of his homeland; the two sentries comment on his song. Pantheus and other Trojan chiefs enter, having been told by Aeneas to prepare to sail. (A ghostly cry of 'To Italia!' is again heard.) The two sentries are annoyed at having to sail: life has been easy in Carthage. They retire as Aeneas comes. He soliloquizes: 'There is no turning back' (Inutiles regrets); he is torn between Dido's love and the gods' command. The ghosts of Priam, Choroebus, Hector and Cassandra appear and reinforce the command. Aeneas stirs up the Trojans asleep in their tents.

Dido enters precipitately and begs Aeneas to stay. The sound of the

Trojan March (first heard when the wooden horse was being dragged into Troy, now a rallying-tune for the Trojan force) recalls him to duty. Dido, heartbroken, leaves; Aeneas, escorted by his men, embarks.

In a room in her palace, Dido is in agony at Aeneas's desertion. To Anna, Narbal and Iopas (who enters to announce that the Trojan fleet has sailed) she proclaims her fury. But when they have left, her bitterness turns inward in an intense, tragic soliloquy: 'Now must I die' (*Je vais mourir*).

On a terrace overlooking the sea a funeral pyre has been lit. The priests of Pluto pray for infernal aid; Anna and Narbal solemnly curse Aeneas. Dido throws into the fire her own veil and a toga which belonged to Aeneas; prophetically, she is inspired to utter the name of the man who will one day avenge Carthage—Hannibal. Then she stabs herself. The people lament. In another prophetic inspiration Dido sees a vision of her people's coming enemy, Rome. She dies. The people vow the vengeance of Carthage on the Rome that is to be.

* * *

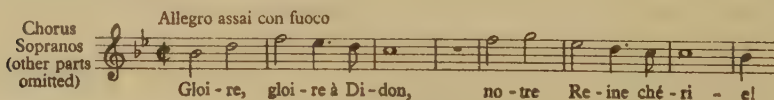
Les Troyens contains some of Berlioz's greatest music: it also contains it in a truly dramatic framework. The brassy pride of the Trojan March, first heard in procession as the Trojans pull the wooden horse within their walls—



(Ex. 1)

—comes again at the very end of the work to indicate that, for all Dido's hope and her people's curses, it is Rome (the successor to Troy) which will triumph over Carthage.

This is in Berlioz's heroic manner, and so is the strain to which Dido is hailed by her courtiers (Act III, scene 1) and which—as Edward J. Dent pointed out—may have been based by Berlioz, who had visited England, on *God Save the Queen*:



(Ex. 2)

Likewise couched in this heroic manner is the tremendous chorus to which Cassandra and the other Trojan women immolate themselves before the eyes of the astonished Greeks.

No less remarkable is the more intimate music—the two great soliloquies in Act V (for Aeneas in scene 1, for Dido in scene 2) and the nocturne-duet for them both ('O sweet night, night of ecstasy unending'):

Andantino non troppo lento
DIDO

p

Nuit d'i - vresse et d'ex - ta - se in - fi - ni - e!

AENEAS

p

Nuit d'i - vresse et d'ex - ta - se in - fi - ni - e!

Andantino non troppo lento

Orch. *p*

(Ex. 3)

—a number which may be compared with the equally ravishing one for Hero and Ursula (two women this time) in *Beatrice and Benedick*.

One of the peculiar and fascinating features of Berlioz's music is the irregularity of its rhythmic patterns. Note the strange, haunting refrain of the young sailor's song in Act V, scene 1 ('Rock me gently, on thy bosom lying, mighty mother sea!'):

Allegretto
HYLAS

Voice *mf*

Ber - ce mol - le - ment sur ton sein sub - li - me

Orch. (upper parts omitted) *mf*

O puis - san - te mer! —

(Ex. 4)

CHARLES FRANÇOIS GOUNOD

(1818-93)

BERLIOZ wrote a *Damnation of Faust* for the concert-hall which has occasionally been staged as an opera; but *Faust* in opera belongs to Gounod. It was the greatest single success of a composer who was enormously successful and enormously prolific. Since the Second World War the position of *Faust* in the international public repertory has significantly declined, much as that of Rossini, Donizetti and Bellini has risen; it would be rash to prophesy that the decline will be permanent. Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette* (1867; after Shakespeare), formerly often given, has slumped too; *Mireille* (1864), a romance set in Provence, is still given in French theatres.

FAUST

*Libretto by Jules Barbier and Michel Carré,
after the play by Goethe*

First performed: Paris, 1850

Five Acts

Cast in order of singing:

Faust, a learned doctor	<i>tenor</i>
Mephistopheles	<i>baritone</i>
Wagner, a student	<i>bass</i>
Valentin, a soldier, Marguerite's brother	<i>baritone</i>
Siebel, a village youth, in love with Marguerite	<i>mezzo-soprano</i>
Marguerite	<i>soprano</i>
Marthe, Marguerite's neighbour	<i>mezzo-soprano</i>

Chorus of students, soldiers, villagers, angels, demons,
legendary figures, etc.

The scene is laid in Germany in the sixteenth century

The first part of Goethe's drama *Faust* was finished in 1808, the second not till 1831. It had great influence on the romantic composers of the nineteenth century (among them Schumann, Wagner, Liszt and Boito—see page 136) and Gounod's *Faust* is founded on it, or rather on that part concerned with Gretchen, known in the opera as Marguerite.

Originally the opera was an 'opéra-comique' in the French sense—that is, using spoken dialogue (the term does not necessarily imply 'comic' opera). But later Gounod arranged it for the Paris Opéra, where recitative had to replace speech: and this has become the standard form. It was also for the Opéra that Gounod added the long ballet in Act V (often cut, in part or altogether, today). For the first London production in 1863 Gounod wrote Valentin's air, known in the lamentable standard English version as 'Even bravest heart may swell', to a tune which he had used in the prelude to the opera.

A word about Mephistopheles—a classic role for baritone as Faust is for tenor and Marguerite for soprano. Mephistopheles is not a pantomime demon with green eye-shadow and so forth. He expressly describes his own first appearance to Faust (we translate literally):

Here I am! Why are you surprised?
Am I not as you imagined me?—
Sword at my side, feather in my hat,
A full purse and a rich cloak over my shoulder—
In a word, a proper gentleman!

ACT I

Old Dr. Faust is alone in his study, disillusioned and weary of life. He is contemplating suicide when he hears in the distance the happy voices of young people. Faust takes up their injunction to prayer, as the voices fade away, but then bursts out bitterly, cursing his learning, his prayers and his patience, and calling on the powers of darkness.

To his astonishment, Mephistopheles appears. He identifies himself, then asks Faust what he wants—is it gold, honour, power? 'My youth restore me' (*Je veux la jeunesse!*),¹ Faust replies. When Faust hesitates before signing away his soul, Mephistopheles summons up a vision of a young and beautiful girl, Marguerite, promising her to Faust, who hesitates no longer. Faust is suddenly transformed into an eager youth, and the two sing of pleasures in store.

ACT II

A gay crowd is gathered at a 'Kermesse' (festival fairground). The chorus 'Red or white liquor' (*Vin ou bière*) introduces, in turn, the voices of students (led by Wagner, one of their number), soldiers, older citizens, girls and matrons, and men. Valentin, Marguerite's brother, sings of his regrets at going to war and leaving his sister unprotected—'Even bravest heart may swell' (*Avant de quitter ces lieux*)—though her young admirer Siebel has promised to look after her.

¹English version by H. F. Chorley (Novello).

Wagner has just embarked on a song when Mephistopheles enters and interrupts, asking if he may sing instead. He sings a profane song: 'Clear the way for the Calf of Gold' (*Le veau d'or*). Valentin and Wagner invite him to drink, but before doing so he tells Valentin's and Siebel's fortunes—gloomy, foreboding ones; Siebel will find that flowers fade at his touch. Mephistopheles then draws wine by sorcery from the barrel forming the inn-sign, and proposes Marguerite's health, to Valentin's annoyance: Valentin draws his sword, but finds himself powerless to use it. The men, recognizing the powers of evil, form the sign of the cross with their swords, and Mephistopheles, angry and impotent, recoils.

The crowd leaves and Faust enters. Seeing Mephistopheles, he asks him if he may meet Marguerite. Mephistopheles tells him that the waltz which now begins will bring her. Young people re-enter, dancing in high spirits, and the older people follow them. Siebel, longing only for Marguerite, refuses to dance. When Marguerite enters, Siebel's approach to her is foiled by Mephistopheles, and Faust proffers his arm. She politely declines, but has evidently been impressed. She leaves. Mephistopheles and Faust depart to plan the next steps, and the dance goes on in rousing fashion.

ACT III

Siebel is alone in Marguerite's garden, singing of his love for her. He picks a flower, which withers in his hand (as Mephistopheles had predicted); but the next flower, picked after he has dipped his fingers in holy water, stays alive. He leaves.

Faust and Mephistopheles enter and Siebel returns with a nosegay for Marguerite; to outshine it, Mephistopheles goes to fetch a casket of jewels. Meanwhile, Faust sings the romance 'All hail, thou dwelling pure and lowly' (*Salut! demeure chaste et pure*). Mephistopheles returns with the jewels. Faust overcomes his scruples; Mephistopheles places the jewels where she will see them, and they leave.

Marguerite enters. She is thinking about the charming man (Faust) who spoke to her. Sitting at her spinning-wheel, she sings an old ballad about the King of Thule, interrupting it from time to time with thoughts of the stranger. As she enters the house she sees Siebel's flowers, then the casket of jewels. She opens it and is astonished to see its contents; she cannot resist bedecking herself in them, and sings with delight: 'Oh, the joy' (*Oh, je ris de me voir*)—the Jewel Song.

Marthe, an older neighbour of Marguerite, enters and admires Marguerite in her finery. Mephistopheles comes to tell Marthe that her husband has been killed, to her distress (which is short-lived). In a quartet Faust converses with Marguerite while Mephistopheles makes himself pleasant to Marthe. Soon Mephistopheles draws her away so as to leave

Faust and Marguerite alone. By now they are both in love, and as evening falls they sing tenderly together. Faust bids her good night, arranging to meet her in the morning, and leaves; but Mephistopheles stops him and draws his attention to Marguerite's window, where she is singing rapturously of her love. Mephistopheles's mocking laughter is heard as Faust climbs through the window to embrace her passionately.

ACT IV

Marguerite has borne Faust's child but has been deserted by him. She is in her room, spinning; her wretchedness contrasts with the gay snatch of song heard from the street. Siebel offers his love but she still hopes for Faust's return.

A scene in a church follows. Marguerite is praying for forgiveness, but Mephistopheles and the distant voices of demons intervene: he tells her that it is too late for repentance and that her soul is his. The voices of a choir in the church, with organ, proclaim the coming Day of Judgment. She prays all the more fervently but the voice of Mephistopheles pursues her.

The scene changes to the street, with the church on one side and Marguerite's house on the other. A march is heard. The soldiers, Valentin among them, are returning from war and sing a rousing chorus: 'Glory and love to the men of yore' (*Gloire immortelle*). It is momentarily interrupted as Valentin greets Siebel. When it is finished, Siebel begs Valentin to forgive his sister. Valentin—puzzled, for he has not yet heard of what has happened—rushes into the house. Mephistopheles, arriving with Faust (who, against Mephistopheles's advice, still wants to see Marguerite), sings a cynical serenade to his own guitar accompaniment.

Valentin angrily emerges from the house, having learnt about Marguerite, and challenges one of them to a duel. After a trio (during which Valentin throws away his medallion of the Madonna, given to him by Marguerite, whom he now rejects), Valentin and Faust fight. With Mephistopheles's supernatural aid, Faust triumphs. As Valentin lies dying, Marthe and other people come to help him, and Marguerite throws herself over his body. But despite pleas from onlookers and from Siebel to forgive her, Valentin curses her angrily.

[The three scenes in this act are sometimes played in the order: Street—Room—Church.]

ACT V

A chorus of will-o'-the-wisps leads off the infernal Walpurgis Night celebrations in the Harz Mountains. Faust is conducted there by Mephistopheles, who presides over the revels, in which many legendary and historical characters appear (in a ballet). A drinking-duet for Faust and

Mephistopheles is interrupted when Faust sees a vision of Marguerite with blood round her neck as though from the blow of an axe. Faust orders Mephistopheles to take him to see Marguerite again.

She is by now in prison, having been condemned to death for the murder of her child during a fit of madness. Mephistopheles leads Faust to her cell to effect her escape, and leaves them alone together. They sing of their happiness at being reunited. But her deranged mind wanders—recalling their meeting at the Kermesse and their evening in the garden—and Faust cannot persuade her to leave with him, for she is now content to die. Mephistopheles returns to hurry them before they are all discovered.

She prays to heaven for salvation while Faust presses her to fly with him and Mephistopheles tries to persuade Faust to leave, even without her. At its climax she makes the meaningful gesture of pushing Faust away. 'She is damned!' (Jugée!) says Mephistopheles, exultantly; but a chorus of angels contradicts him with 'Saved!' (Sauvée!). Her soul is borne away. Faust sinks to his knees and (to quote the stage direction) 'Mephistopheles is half bent back under the luminous sword of the Archangel.' A choral outburst—the Easter hymn of Christ's resurrection—ends the opera.



No opera has produced more 'hit tunes'—we use the words without a hint of being patronizing—than *Faust*. The Fair Scene; the Soldiers' Chorus; 'Even bravest heart' (Valentin's farewell); the Choral Waltz in Act II; Siebel's song when bringing his bouquet for Marguerite; Faust's 'All hail, thou dwelling'; Marguerite's Jewel Song; Marguerite and Faust's love-duet; the tune of the final trio; several of the tunes from the ballet music—all these came down from the opera stage to conquer the nineteenth-century public in song-albums, piano selections, arrangements for bands and orchestras of all kinds. Today *Faust* sounds (to borrow the old joke about *Hamlet*) 'full of quotations', and the very familiarity of the music may make us overlook its inventiveness. Take for example the musical delineation of the different groups of participants in the Fair Scene; take the cross-rhythms between voices and orchestra in the Choral Waltz ('Like the breeze at early morning') (Ex. 1).

The orchestral tune (which is the main one, the chorus accompanying) starts off in such a way that it could be notated in 2/4 time.

Another melody from this waltz recurs later in the opera—when Marguerite, in prison and half delirious, begins to recall in Faust's presence the scene where they first met. Note the dramatic aptness: Marguerite, her thoughts turning inwards in concentration, can manage only a single note (in fact she keeps that single note for thirty-two bars of music) and it is on the orchestra that the reminiscence steals in; moreover, it

Chorus
Sopranos
(other voices
omitted)

Tempo di valse

f Ain - si que la bri-se lé - gè - re sou -

Orch.

- lève en é - pais tour-bil - lons

(Ex. 1)

does so with a modulation (from F to D) which is simple but which exactly hits off the change of 'plane' between the present and the memory of the past:

Allegro
non troppo Tempo di valse
MARGUERITE

Voice

[*p*] sur mon cœur. At-

Orch.

pp

- tends! Voi-ci la ru - [e]

(Ex. 2)

Marguerite's words as the vision appears to her are 'But wait! . . . Here is the street . . .' This introspective aspect of Marguerite's character makes an admirable foil to the brilliance of the Jewel Song—and there,

again subtly, the brilliance is never overdone: Marguerite still manages to be her innocent, unspoilt self, suddenly swept off her feet.

The final trio has one of the most powerful strokes in opera, the repetition of a melody at a higher pitch to screw up the excitement. (Verdi did it later in the trumpet tune of the Triumphal March in *Aida*.) Marguerite, asking the angels to transport her to heaven, leads off in G:

Moderato maestoso
MARGUERITE

Voice

[*f*] An - ges purs, an - ges ra - di -

Orch.

f *p*

- eux, Por-tez mon âme au sein des cieux!

(Ex. 3)

Note the harp accompaniment; its 'celestial' connotations are obvious, just as are the connotations of the organ in the church scene.

Faust asks her to fly with him; her prayer gets more intense by being pushed into A; Mephistopheles adds his plea but Marguerite now pushes the tune up to B. And even this is not the end; the angelic interruption of 'Saved!' (harps again!) leads to the key of C major, the actual chord being struck when the Easter hymn of the resurrection (organ again!) begins. This is musical language absolutely wedded to dramatic action.

JACQUES OFFENBACH

(1819-80)

AMONG the many musicians attracted to Paris from other countries was Jacques Offenbach (born Jakob Eberst in Cologne—his family came from Offenbach) who arrived in 1833 to study the cello at the Paris Conservatory and became, from the 1850s, the leading composer of French operettas. He turned out nearly a hundred of these (including *Orpheus in the Underworld*, first version 1858; *La Belle Hélène*, 1864; and *La Vie Parisienne*, 1866), but wrote only one serious opera and did not quite finish it nor live to see it performed. It is a masterpiece and—with its peculiar dramatic intermingling of reality and fantasy—a work like no other in the opera repertory: *The Tales of Hoffmann*.

LES CONTES D'HOFFMANN

(The Tales of Hoffmann)

*Libretto by Jules Barbier and Michel Carré, after a play
of their own based on stories by E. T. A. Hoffmann*

First performed: Paris, 1881

Prologue, Three Acts and Epilogue

Cast in order of singing or speaking:

PROLOGUE AND EPILOGUE

Councillor Lindorf	<i>baritone</i>
Andreas, servant of Stella	<i>tenor</i>
Luther, keeper of a beer-cellar	<i>bass</i>
Hermann } students	{ <i>baritone</i>
Nathaniel }	
Hoffmann, a poet	<i>tenor</i>
Nicklaus, his friend	<i>mezzo-soprano</i>
Stella, an opera singer	<i>speaking part</i>
The Muse of Poetry	<i>speaking part</i>

Chorus of students

ACTS I, II AND III

Spalanzani, a physicist and inventor	<i>tenor</i>
Hoffmann	<i>tenor</i>
Cochenille, Spalanzani's servant	<i>tenor</i>
Nicklaus	<i>mezzo-soprano</i>
Dr. Coppelius, a spectacle-maker	<i>baritone</i>
Olympia, Spalanzani's 'daughter', loved by Hoffmann	<i>soprano</i>
Antonia, a girl, loved by Hoffmann	<i>soprano</i>
Crespel, her father, a councillor	<i>baritone</i>
Franz, Crespel's servant	<i>tenor</i>
Dr. Miracle, an evil physician	<i>baritone</i>
A voice (Antonia's mother)	<i>mezzo-soprano</i>
Giulietta, a Venetian courtesan, loved by Hoffmann	<i>soprano</i>
Schlemil } two other admirers	{ <i>bass</i>
Pittichinaccio } of Giulietta	
Dapertutto, an evil magician	<i>baritone</i>

Chorus of guests at Spalanzani's house and of Venetian
ladies and gentlemen, etc.

In the Prologue and Epilogue the scene is laid in Nuremberg,
and in the three acts respectively in Paris, Munich and Venice
in the early nineteenth century

E. T. A. Hoffmann (1776–1822) was a German novelist and amateur composer; his writings occupy an important place in the German literary romantic movement and he wrote a famous 'romantic' interpretation of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. So it is appropriate that a strain from *Don Giovanni* is quoted in Offenbach's opera, in which Hoffmann is the hero. Hoffmann himself appears as story-teller in the prologue and epilogue: between come the three acts (each founded on one of the real Hoffmann's stories) which tell of his different loves.

Because Offenbach died before finishing the work, Ernest Guiraud (1837–92) undertook its orchestration; he also wrote recitatives for the work. (He did similarly for *Carmen*: see page 224). But in recent years there has been a tendency for opera-houses to eliminate the recitatives and to give the work with spoken dialogue, as Offenbach intended. Moreover, though the published vocal score gives the three acts (with three different heroines) in the order Olympia—Giulietta—Antonia, it was Offenbach's intention to have the 'Giulietta' act last, as a reference in the prologue and another in the epilogue make clear. Various modern productions have adopted this authentic order, and so do we in the following synopsis.

Ideally, all three heroines—being dramatically treated as different incarnations of Hoffmann's beloved—should be sung by the same soprano.

This has occasionally, but not often, been done. But it is normal, on the same dramatic grounds, for the four 'villain' roles (Lindorf, Coppelius, Dr. Miracle and Dapertutto) to be sung by the same baritone, as an incarnation of the evil genius who foils Hoffmann at every turn. Certain other roles may also be doubled.

The voice of Stella must be the only example of a role in opera which is that of an opera-singer and which calls for no singing! The role of Nicklaus is given to a mezzo-soprano, representing a youth; it has been observed that Nicklaus is apparently never addressed by anyone in the opera except Hoffmann—as if he were, so to speak, a projection of Hoffmann, his 'better self', pressing the claims of conscience and duty on a being who is ruled by passion.

PROLOGUE

In Luther's beer-cellar at Nuremberg (sited next to an opera-house, where the celebrated singer Stella is appearing in *Don Giovanni*), voices are heard singing in praise of beer and wine. Lindorf—a married man, but pursuing Stella—enters, and bribes Stella's servant Andreas into handing over a letter addressed by Stella to Hoffmann. The letter encloses the key of her room and Lindorf eagerly looks forward to keeping the assignation in Hoffmann's place.

Luther comes in with waiters to prepare the room for a crowd of students, who soon arrive, singing lustily, led by Hermann and Nathaniel. Nathaniel proposes a toast to Stella, then Hermann and he ask Luther where Hoffmann is: just then Hoffmann arrives, with his friend Nicklaus, who ironically quotes from the music of Leporello's opening song in *Don Giovanni* and applies the words to the way Hoffmann's escapades tire him out night and day—'Notte e giorno faticar'.

Hoffmann is at first in reflective mood. In response to eager requests he sings a comic song about a dwarf, Kleinzack—but his romantic musings lead him astray in the middle and he sings of his pursuit of love. Soon after, Hoffmann sees Lindorf, who mocks him; Hoffmann recognizes in Lindorf the force of evil which has always dogged him, and the two exchange insults. The conversation turns to the students' girls: Hoffmann talks of his three loves (all now embodied in Stella). Disregarding Luther's warning that the curtain is about to rise on the next act of the opera, the students prepare to listen as Hoffmann relates the stories of his three encounters . . . 'The first was called Olympia . . .'

ACT I

In Paris, the physicist and inventor Spalanzani boasts a 'daughter', Olympia. Hoffmann, who has become Spalanzani's pupil and fancies himself in love with Olympia, comes in. Spalanzani, after giving orders to

his servant Cochenille, leaves Hoffmann alone. Hoffmann peeps behind a curtain and sees Olympia, apparently sleeping. Enraptured, he sings: 'To live with thee' (Ah! vivre deux).¹ Nicklaus enters and tells Hoffmann that Spalanzani's sole interest is science and that he makes lifelike dolls: 'He has a doll with eyes of grey' (Une poupée aux yeux d'émail).

But Hoffmann fails, or refuses, to take the obvious hint. Coppélius, an inventor and Spalanzani's rival, arrives. He sings of his scientific wares and sells Hoffmann a pair of magic 'eyes' through which Olympia seems still more wonderful. Spalanzani returns, and, out of earshot of Hoffmann, Coppélius claims his share of the income which Spalanzani will earn from Olympia, for Coppélius made her eyes. Spalanzani pays Coppélius with a cheque drawn on a banker whom he knows is really bankrupt.

The guests now begin to arrive for Olympia's splendid coming-out dance. Nicklaus and Hoffmann look forward to seeing the beautiful girl. Soon Spalanzani leads her out, to the admiration of all assembled, especially Hoffmann. Spalanzani offers to have her sing to her own harp accompaniment. She sings a coloratura aria—'Ev'ry grove with song-birds laden' (Les oiseaux dans la charmille)—but there is a strange running-down in the middle which Spalanzani has to remedy by winding up a mechanism. Hoffmann, utterly enchanted, and still not realizing what Olympia is, wishes to take her to supper, but Spalanzani cunningly asks him to stay behind with her. The guests go down. Hoffmann, alone with Olympia, sings lovingly to her: as he touches her shoulder she makes a mechanical response. Finally, he takes her hand: she rises, moves around in various directions and goes off, to Hoffmann's dismay. Nicklaus comes in and tries to tell him the truth about her, but he will not listen.

Coppélius enters, having found that Spalanzani's cheque is worthless and eager for revenge. He disappears, to conceal himself in Olympia's room and wait for her. The guests reassemble and the dance begins. Hoffmann takes Olympia as his partner; they dance for a while, whirling more and more rapidly, until Spalanzani taps her and stops them (after Nicklaus has tried and failed). Hoffmann has fallen and is dazed: his spectacles (the 'eyes' Coppélius gave him) are broken. As he begins to recover, there is a sound of breaking machinery. Coppélius, in an inner room, has destroyed Olympia. Hoffmann, aghast, at last begins to realize that she was only a puppet. As Coppélius and Spalanzani shout abuse at one another, the guests deride the deluded Hoffmann.

ACT II

The second story takes place in Munich. Antonia, whom Hoffmann loves, is seated at the harpsichord in her room, singing unhappily: 'Thou art flown' (Elle a fui). Her father, Crespel, enters and reminds her of her

¹ English version by Edward Agate (Cramer).

promise never to sing—she inherits her mother's voice and also her mother's fatal tendency to tuberculosis, which her singing aggravates. She goes off, renewing her promise. Crespel, worried that Hoffmann is disturbing her peace of mind, orders his deaf servant Franz to admit no one. After a comic song for Franz, Hoffmann arrives with Nicklaus, and Franz, having misheard his instructions, admits them.

Hoffmann sings a snatch of the love-duet he and Antonia used to sing. Antonia comes and the lovers embrace passionately; Nicklaus leaves them to express their love. She mentions that she is forbidden to sing, but he presses her; she goes to the harpsichord and they sing a duet (incorporating the strain which Hoffmann had previously sung). At the end she becomes faint, then, hearing her father coming, she goes off to her room. Hoffmann hides.

Franz comes in and announces Dr. Miracle. Crespel orders him to be sent off—he does not want Antonia killed by Miracle's treatment, just as his wife was. But Miracle enters and insists on treating her, to the fear of both Crespel and the concealed Hoffmann. By magical means he diagnoses her illness in her absence and, despite Crespel's angry protests, prescribes for her. As if she hears Miracle's command, 'Now sing!' (*Chantez!*), her voice is heard. Miracle remains unruffled during Crespel's furious attempts to eject him, returning through the wall when pushed out by the door. Eventually he leaves, followed by Crespel.

Antonia returns to find Hoffmann alone. Before he goes he warns her to forget her dreams of becoming a singer. She agrees never to sing again ('*Je ne chanterai plus*'). Then Miracle returns, as if by magic: he takes up her words, reproaching her for wasting so great a talent and telling her of the dazzling future in store for her as a singer. She is disturbed and looks to her mother's portrait for comfort. It comes to life and speaks to her, bidding her to sing, and Miracle plays wildly on a violin to rouse her excitement. At the end, Miracle disappears into the earth, the portrait resumes its old form and Antonia falls, dying.

Crespel comes in, exchanging only a few words with his daughter before she dies. As Hoffmann enters, Crespel turns on him and accuses him of being responsible. Hoffmann merely tells Nicklaus to fetch a doctor, in response to which Miracle appears. He pronounces her dead.

ACT III

Hoffmann's third tale is enacted in Venice. The setting is a palace overlooking the Grand Canal; a Barcarolle is sung by Nicklaus and the courtesan Giulietta with the assembled company. Hoffmann then sings a gay drinking song: 'When love is but tender' (*Amis, l'amour tendre*). He loves Giulietta but her accepted companion is at present Schlemil. Now

Giulietta introduces Hoffmann to Schlemil and also to another admirer of hers, Pittichinaccio, and suggests a game of cards.

They go off, leaving Nicklaus and Hoffmann alone: Nicklaus warns his friend not to be foolish, but Hoffmann is in love with Giulietta and will not easily be restrained. As they depart Dapertutto enters—a sorcerer who uses Giulietta to enslave his victims. He has already enslaved Schlemil and is determined to capture Hoffmann. He exhibits the diamond with which he will again bribe Giulietta to do his will: ‘As jewels divine’ (Scintille, diamant).

Giulietta enters and Dapertutto asks her to captivate Hoffmann so that he can capture his soul by stealing his reflection in her mirror. Hoffmann, coming in as Dapertutto departs, sings passionately of his love for her. She warns him of Schlemil’s jealousy but says she loves him; then she begs him to look in her mirror, so that when he goes she can retain his likeness for ever. He is mystified but consents.

Schlemil enters with Pittichinaccio, Nicklaus, Dapertutto and others. Dapertutto hands Hoffmann a mirror: he is horrified to find that his reflection has vanished. Nicklaus tries vainly to lead the distracted Hoffmann away. Hoffmann proclaims that he both hates and adores Giulietta, and the others comment on the situation. Now (in spoken dialogue, as the Barcarolle is heard again in the background) Hoffmann demands of Schlemil the key to Giulietta’s room: they fight, Hoffmann using Dapertutto’s sword, and Schlemil is killed. Hoffmann grabs the key and rushes off to Giulietta’s room—but returns as Giulietta approaches, below, in a gondola. She is alone. But instead of accepting Hoffmann as a lover, she abandons him as a victim to Dapertutto and takes Pittichinaccio into her arms. Nicklaus drags the disillusioned Hoffmann away.

EPILOGUE

Back in Luther’s inn, Hoffmann tells his friends that his tales are finished. In the distance, cheers are heard, which Luther says are for Stella. Lindorf slips out. In answer to a remark of Nathaniel’s, Nicklaus explains that Stella is the embodiment of Olympia, Antonia and Giulietta, and all drink to her. At first this infuriates Hoffmann, but then he decides that drowning his sorrows in punch is the only solution. The students go off, leaving Hoffmann slumped over the table, dead-drunk. In a vision, the Muse of Poetry appears and asks him to devote his life to her, to which he joyfully consents.

Stella enters and sees Hoffmann. Nicklaus explains that he is drunk; Lindorf comes in and draws her towards him. The students’ voices, lifted in a drinking song, are heard again.

The puppet Olympia is characterized by an aria that is at once expressive yet capable of being delivered (by a skilled soprano) in a slightly mechanical, left-hand-then-right-hand sort of way. It is also extremely difficult to sing accurately in tune!

Andante
OLYMPIA *grz*

Voice [mf] Ah! voi-là la chan-son gen-til - - - - - le

(Ex. 1)

In complete contrast, Antonia introduces herself with a rather slow, intense song about a turtle-dove, with the most delicately hinted accompaniment:

Andante
ANTONIA

Voice [p] Elle a fui, la tour-te-rel-le!

Orch. p

(Ex. 2)

Giulietta has, rather remarkably, no comparable solo—but the Barcarolle, which Nicklaus begins and in which Giulietta presently joins, is the strongest indication of her (and Venice's) seductive charms. The most

Largo
HOFFMANN

Voice p Ah, Dieu, de quelle i-vresse em -

Piano pp

- bras - ses - tu mon â - me, Comme

(Ex. 3)

notable solo in this act is the famous baritone song 'As jewels divine' (showing the power of the evil genius who confronts Hoffmann). Hoffmann's own romantic, expansive nature is shown in the opening of his duet with Giulietta. He is intoxicated with love (Ex. 3).

Although Hoffmann and Giulietta sing ecstatically together later in this duet, Giulietta's feeling for Hoffmann is merely a courtesan's fancy; so Offenbach never gives her the phrase of genuine passion we have quoted from Hoffmann's part.

The celebrated Barcarolle, in its proper version for two women's voices (at the opening of Act III), was transferred from Offenbach's unsuccessful opera *Sprites of the Rhine* (Rheinnixen), produced at Vienna in 1864.

GEORGES BIZET

(1838-75)

ORIENTAL subjects, with opportunities for exotic-sounding music, were much favoured in nineteenth-century Paris. It is ironical that *Samson and Delilah* by Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921), though written for the Paris Opéra, was declined by its management and first staged in 1877 at Weimar in Germany. (Owing to objections to its biblical plot, it was not staged in London till 1909.) In 1883 Paris saw the first performance of an opera about the daughter of a Brahmin priest in love with a British officer in India—*Lakmé* by Léo Delibes (1836-91). It is still performed today, though it has hardly the 'classic' status of Delibes's two celebrated ballets, *Coppélia* (on the story by E. T. A. Hoffmann which also furnished the 'Olympia' episode in Offenbach's *Tales of Hoffmann*) and *Sylvia*.

Oriental subjects were also used by Georges Bizet in two operas: *The Pearl Fishers* (1865) and *Djamileh* (1872; one act, unsuccessful). And Bizet found another 'orient' (that is, a setting giving dramatic opportunity for an exceptional, exotic touch in the music) at the very door of France: in Spain. *Carmen* was produced in 1875; displeased most of the critics; was reckoned a failure. Tchaikovsky, visiting Paris at the time, prophesied that within ten years it would be the most popular opera in the world. He over-estimated, but not by much. Incidentally, Tchaikovsky's own use of a boys' chorus imitating soldiers at the opening of *The Queen of Spades* is the frankest of tributes to Bizet's masterpiece.

Among Bizet's other works is the opera *The Fair Maid of Perth* (1867), based on Scott's novel.

CARMEN

*Libretto by Henri Meilhac and Ludovic Halévy,
after Prosper Mérimée*

First performed: Paris, 1875

Four Acts

Cast in order of singing :

Morales, a corporal	<i>baritone</i>
Micaela, a peasant girl from Navarra	<i>soprano</i>
Don José, a corporal, from Navarra	<i>tenor</i>
Zuniga, a lieutenant	<i>bass</i>
Carmen, a gipsy	<i>mezzo-soprano</i>
Frasquita, a gipsy	<i>soprano</i>
Mercedes, a gipsy	<i>soprano</i>
Escamillo, a toreador	<i>baritone</i>
El Dancairo, a smuggler	<i>baritone</i>
El Remendado, a smuggler	<i>tenor</i>
Two gipsies	<i>mezzo-soprano, baritone</i>

Chorus of soldiers, street-boys, townspeople, cigarette-girls,
gipsies, smugglers

The scene is laid in Seville in the 1820s

Say 'seductive Spanish gipsy' and we think of Carmen; say 'toreador' and we think of Escamillo's swaggering tune. Bizet's opera has come to have an almost proverbial status. Its ever-fresh score, admired by such dissimilar musicians as Brahms and Debussy, has combined with its dramatic story to preserve its popularity the world over.

Indeed, its tunes are now so well loved, its plot so well understood, and its heroine so widely recognized as representing a whole type of female behaviour, that we scarcely think of what a shocker the opera originally seemed. Girls smoking on the stage (in 1875)! Such a disgusting death for the heroine—and on the stage of the Opéra-Comique, dedicated by tradition to much less sordid fare!

Not that 'opéra-comique' in France means precisely 'comic opera'. As we have noted in considering Gounod's *Faust* (see page 209), its distinguishing feature was the use of spoken dialogue—in place of recitative, which was used in works presented at the larger theatre, the Paris Opéra. Later (after Bizet's death) *Carmen* was performed and published in an all-sung version, with recitatives added by Bizet's friend Ernest Guiraud (1837-92). The modern tendency is to restore the spoken dialogue, which makes the action much clearer, and also to restore certain parts of Bizet's original score which were omitted from the published version.

ACT I

The curtain rises on a square in Seville, with a tobacco factory on one side and a guard-house on the other. Soldiers, led by Morales, sing as they lounge and watch the bustle of people in the street. Micaela, a simple country girl, comes to ask Morales if he knows a corporal called Don José,

who is her sweetheart; he tries to flirt a little with her and tells her that José will soon come, when the guard changes. She goes, and the soldiers briefly resume their song.

Trumpets off-stage signal the approach of the new guard, a crowd of urchins following and imitating them admiringly. The children sing as the guard is changed, José commanding the relief. Morales tells José that a girl has inquired after him.

Zuniga, an officer only recently posted to Seville, asks José about the girls in the cigarette factory. They are 'fast' by reputation, but they do not interest José, who loves only Micaela. A bell sounds and the girls come out of the factory smoking, watched by a crowd of men, with whom they exchange pleasantries. The last girl to appear from the factory is Carmen, a seductive gipsy beauty. Only José ignores her. She sings a habanera: 'Love is like an elusive bird' (*L'amour est un oiseau rebelle*).¹ All the young men sue for her favours, but her eye has fallen on José, and she tosses a flower to him before going back into the factory.

José, left alone, is disturbed by the incident. Then Micaela arrives: she has come to give José a letter—and a kiss—from his mother. In their duet, 'Tell me then of my mother' (*Parle-moi de ma mère*), the two sing nostalgically of the village which was his home. When she goes he reads the letter, which urges him to marry Micaela.

Suddenly there is a commotion in the factory and girls come running out, chattering about a quarrel involving Carmen. Zuniga sends José with two soldiers to investigate. He soon comes out with Carmen, who sings an impudent 'Tra-la-la!' in reply to Zuniga's questions. It seems that she attacked another girl with a knife, so Zuniga sends her off to prison, in José's charge.

Carmen and José are left alone in the square. She speaks seductively to him; he forbids her to speak to him, so she sings—to herself, she pretends—a seguidilla, 'Close by the ramparts of Seville' (*Près des remparts de Séville*). Soon José is entirely captivated. In response to her promise that she will give him her love at Lillas Pastia's inn, he loosens the cord round her wrists. Zuniga returns with the warrant for her arrest. While a crowd watches, José begins to march Carmen away. But suddenly she turns, gives him a push (as she had arranged with him) and rushes away, to the amusement of the crowd. [In stage performances, José is usually put under arrest immediately by Zuniga for permitting Carmen's escape.]

ACT II

It is two months later. In Lillas Pastia's tavern, where Carmen had told José she would wait for him, gipsies are dancing. Carmen sings the Gipsy

¹ English version by Hermann Klein (Cramer).

Song, 'Ah, when of gay guitars the sound' (*Les tringles des sistres tintaient*), in which Frasquita and Mercedes join. Zuniga is present and tries to lead Carmen off, but she refuses to go; he mentions that José, who had been imprisoned for permitting Carmen's escape, has just been released. Soon Escamillo, a famous toreador, arrives. He is cheered by all present and sings the Toreador's Song, 'Sirs, your toast' (*Votre toast*), with their support, and before he leaves he makes a bid for Carmen. Zuniga and the rest of the crowd soon follow, hurried off by the innkeeper, leaving Carmen, Frasquita and Mercedes.

Two smugglers, Dancairo and Remendado, enter and ask the three women for immediate help in a venture. Carmen refuses, knowing that José will come—but she agrees to try to persuade him to desert and join them. The others leave Carmen as José is heard approaching: 'Dragoon of Alcalá' (*Dragon d'Alcalá*). He comes and declares his love. She is dancing for him when, hearing bugles calling him to duty, he prepares to leave. She is angry and sarcastic—this is love that can be quelled by a bugle-call! He tries to assure her of his love, telling her that he has kept, throughout his imprisonment, the flower she threw to him: 'See here your flower' (*La fleur que tu m'avais jetée*)—the Flower Song. She tempts him with visions of a free and happy life together among the smugglers and gipsies in the mountains.

He resists and is about to leave when there is a knock at the door and Zuniga enters. He asks Carmen if she prefers a common soldier to an officer, and orders José back to camp. José refuses and draws his sword against his officer. The smugglers, who have been in hiding, disarm Zuniga and send him off in the custody of some gipsies. By defying his officer José has turned his back on the army. To leave with Carmen is now the only way for him, and he joins in a chorus in praise of the free life.

ACT III

In the smugglers' mountain lair, preparations are being made for an exploit, led by Dancairo. By now Carmen is tiring of José, who is unhappy at the kind of life he is leading; she suggests that he should leave them, but he is bitterly jealous and threatens her angrily. As the men rest, Frasquita, Mercedes and Carmen read their fortunes in the cards. Carmen sees only death for herself—'and later for him'.

Dancairo leads the smugglers off, singing of their plans; the women go with them, to beguile the customs officers. The stage is empty when a figure appears in the darkness: it is Micaela, who has paid a guide to take her to the smugglers' lair and prays that God will help her to lead José back to his mother: 'I said nought should frighten me here' (*Je dis que rien m'épouvante*). She sees him approaching; then, as a shot rings out,

she hides. José had seen a man coming and only just missed him. The man identifies himself as Escamillo, who has been in the region rounding up bulls for his next fight. In a duet Escamillo says he has come to see Carmen, who is tiring of her latest lover, a soldier ('her affairs only last six months'). José's jealousy is aroused; he challenges Escamillo, who then realizes that José is the man, and they fight.

José is about to kill his rival when Carmen arrives and seizes his arm. Dancairo tells Escamillo to go, which he does, but not before he has taunted José, who has to be held back by the smugglers. They are leaving again when Remendado finds Micaela in hiding. She pleads with José to come away with her. Carmen and the smugglers too tell him to go, but he swears that only death can part him from Carmen. But when Micaela says that his mother is dying he consents to leave, and even then he threateningly tells Carmen that they will meet again. Escamillo's voice is heard from a distance and Carmen moves towards him, but José menacingly bars her way.

ACT IV

Tradesmen, gipsies, children and townspeople are seen filling the square in Seville, outside the amphitheatre where a bull-fight is to be held. Zuniga is there, making small purchases from the gipsies. Soon the colourful procession of those taking part in the bull-fight starts, hailed by the bystanders (including children); Escamillo brings up the rear in triumph, to shouts of his name. After a brief love-duet with Carmen, who is with him, he goes off to prepare for the fight. Frasquita and Mercedes have seen José in the crowd and warn Carmen to take care, but she is unafraid.

José intercepts Carmen as she moves towards the arena. He begs her to return to him, to go away with him, forgetting the past; but she says her love is dead and he demands the impossible. Despite his repeated pleas she remains adamant. From the arena, cheers for Escamillo are heard. Carmen tries to enter but he bars her way, determined that she shall not go to her new lover. Again the cheers are heard. José becomes more violent. She demands that he kills her or lets her pass. Then she throws his ring at him and tries to slip past him, but he catches her on the arena steps and plunges his knife into her back. As she falls dead the crowd, singing the Toreador's Song, comes out of the amphitheatre and sees her. Kneeling by her lifeless body, José gives himself up.

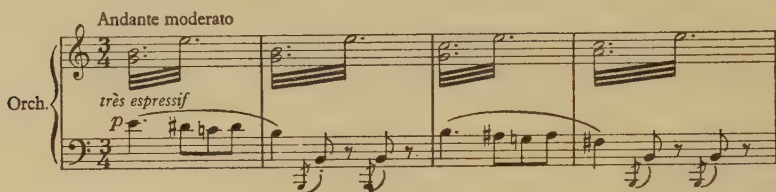
* * *

The cigarette-girls come out of the factory with a studiedly languid air as they puff at their cigarettes, and the music which they sing is languid too. Then, suddenly loud and with an abrupt change of tempo, Carmen enters:



(Ex. 1)

Even opera-goers familiar with *Carmen* would not necessarily recognize this tune, played here on the violins, but it is metamorphosed later in the scene into a theme which is unforgettable:



(Ex. 2)

This has already been heard in the prelude, and is first heard in the opera when Carmen throws the flower at Don José, thus establishing her power over him; it recurs at various points, up to the very end of the opera when José gives himself up for her murder. But this recurrence is not part of a general web of leading-motives used symphonically; it is a unique ‘fate’ motive.

The Toreador’s Song is also requoted. It is the best-known piece in the opera, and has to be delivered with swagger by Escamillo: Bizet marked it to be sung ‘with fatuity’—which shows just how he viewed Escamillo’s character.

The habanera sung by Carmen—‘Love is like an elusive bird’—

Allegretto assai andantino $\text{♩} = 72$
CARMEN

Voice *p*

L’a - mour est un oi - seau re - belle Que nul ne
peut ap - pri - voi - ser

(Ex. 3)

is an adaptation of a Spanish-American song by Sebastian Yradier (1809-65); and the entr’acte before Act IV and the snatch of melody with

which Carmen defies Zuniga in Act I are also borrowings from Spanish sources.

But the atmosphere which is so striking in this opera is not mainly a matter of borrowing but of a daringly original mind working on his material. When Carmen dances for José in Lillas Pastia's tavern she has her own tune (sung to 'la'); with this she (or a performer in the orchestra) plays the castanets in a typically Spanish rhythm; and at the same time two bugles (Bizet specified that instrument, not trumpets) sound the retreat, summoning José back to barracks. The three strains intertwine in a whole which represents exactly what is in José's mind.

As remarkable as anything in the work is the characterization of Micaela. As the opposite of Carmen she might have been simpering and pale. But her music is strong:

[Andante] ♩ = 88
MICAELA
espress.

Voice *p*
Et, tu lui di - ras que sa mè - re son - gè

Orch. *pp*

nuit et jour à l'ab - sent.

★

(Ex. 4)

Notice the force of the unorthodox harmony at ★.

Dramatically, Micaela is strong partly because she represents not only herself but also José's mother from whom she comes. This is one of the incidental virtues of a libretto which, in itself, is one of the best ever written.

JULES MASSENET

(1842-1912)

MUCH of Massenet's music may seem today too obvious in its sensuous charm, and we need not look for a revival of most of his operas: he wrote no fewer than twenty-seven, excluding those unfinished and unperformed! The mixing of the religious and the erotic (which had already provided two major operatic successes in Wagner's *Tannhäuser* and Gounod's *Faust*, and was to come to its musical climax in Richard Strauss's *Salome*) was congenial to Massenet. His *Hérodiade* (Herodias; 1881) and *Thaïs* had considerable success and are still occasionally given, especially in France. So, on a quite different kind of 'domestic' subject, is *Werther* (1892). But *Manon* (in which, it will be noted, the interplay of religious and erotic impulses again has a place) is reckoned its composer's masterpiece. He also wrote a little-known sequel to it, *Le Portrait de Manon* (1894).

MANON

*Libretto by Henri Meilhac and Philippe Gille,
after the novel by the Abbé Prévost*

First performed: Paris, 1884

Five Acts

Cast in order of singing:

Guillot de Morfontaine, Minister of Finance, an old roué	tenor
De Brétigny, a nobleman	baritone
Poussette	{ actresses soprano soprano mezzo-soprano
Javotte	
Rosette	
Innkeeper	
Lescaut, of the Royal Guard, Manon's cousin	baritone
Two Guardsmen	tenors
Manon Lescaut	soprano
The Chevalier des Grieux	tenor
The Count des Grieux, his father	bass

Chorus of citizens, travellers, postilions, porters, street-vendors,
worshippers, gamblers, soldiers

The scene is laid in France (Amiens, Paris and near Le Havre) in 1721

The Abbé Prévost (1697–1763) was a soldier (in his youth), a novelist, and a translator into French of Richardson's English novels, as well as a member of the Benedictine order. His most famous work is the novel *Manon Lescaut* (1731), a classic treatment of the bad girl as literary heroine (dying in the end, of course). It has the peculiar distinction of having inspired four operas over ninety-six years, from *Manon Lescaut* by Auber (1856) to Hans Werner Henze's *Boulevard Solitude* (a modern-dress adaptation, 1952)—with the two best-known examples in between, Massenet's *Manon* (1884) and Puccini's *Manon Lescaut* (1893).

Dramatically, a notable difference between these two is that Puccini follows the novel in showing Manon as dying in the wilds of America, after her sentence of transportation; in Massenet's opera she dies before the planned embarkation at Le Havre. Massenet gives his heroine much sentimental charm, and the same kind of appeal goes into the musical portrayal of the hero, in the romantic dilemma of having to choose between passion and priesthood.

ACT I

In the courtyard of an inn at Amiens, two well-to-do clients, Guillot and de Brétigny, have arrived with their gay companions, Poussette, Javotte and Rosette—described as actresses, really Guillot's mistresses. They clamour impatiently for a meal. Soon the innkeeper announces that it is ready and they go to a pavilion to eat.

People gather to watch the arrival of the stagecoach, and the innkeeper comments on it. Lescaut, a young guardsman, enters with two travelling-companions whom he sends off into the inn while he awaits the coach. (He is to meet his young cousin Manon, who is travelling in the coach on her way to entering a convent.) The coach arrives and there is a general bustle of passengers, porters and others. Lescaut finds Manon among the crowd and they introduce themselves to one another; he comments on her beauty. Rather confused after the journey, Manon tells Lescaut of her feelings: 'I can't express all my emotion' (*Je suis encore tout étourdie*).¹ Once more there is a flurry of activity as preparations are made for the coach's departure. Lescaut goes off to fetch Manon's baggage; Guillot offers to elope with her; she laughs at him and his companions call him back. But he tells Manon that his coach will call in a few minutes and is at her service.

Lescaut comes back and Guillot rejoins his friends. Intending to go and play cards with the guardsmen, Lescaut solemnly warns Manon not to listen to any frivolous propositions. Left alone, she sings with sad resignation of her dreams as she sees the prettily dressed 'actresses' at the inn: 'So I will stay' (*Restons ici*).

¹ English version by Norman Feasey.

The Chevalier des Grieux enters, musing on his coming reunion with his father. Suddenly he sees Manon, and is at once enchanted by her. Within a few moments both are deeply in love. She tells him that she is destined for a convent, but he begs her to come away to Paris with him and they sing together rapturously. The coach ordered by Guillot arrives and they decide to go to Paris together in it.

From inside the inn, the girls' laughter is heard, and Lescaut's voice. Lescaut and Guillot come out. In fury, Lescaut charges Guillot with the abduction of Manon. The innkeeper tells Lescaut that Manon went off with a young man in Guillot's coach. The bystanders mock Guillot as he vows revenge on the eloping pair.

ACT II

Des Grieux and Manon are living in a small Paris apartment. He is writing to his father, asking his consent to his marriage with Manon, and he and Manon read the letter over together. (From it we learn that she is only just sixteen.) Two men in soldier's uniform are brought in by the maid. One is Lescaut; the other, pretending to be Lescaut's fellow-guardsmen, is de Brétigny, who hopes to become Manon's lover. (Manon recognizes him; des Grieux does not.) Des Grieux and Lescaut at first quarrel angrily; Manon is afraid, and de Brétigny tries to restrain his friend. But des Grieux assures Lescaut of his honourable intentions. While he shows him the letter he was writing, de Brétigny draws Manon aside and tells her that des Grieux's father plans to take him away from Paris by force that very evening. De Brétigny dissuades her from warning her lover; would she not prefer a life of luxury with de Brétigny to poverty with des Grieux?

The visitors depart and des Grieux goes to send off his letter. Alone, Manon reflects on her weakness in failing to reject de Brétigny's offer and on the coming end of her idyll with des Grieux: 'Farewell, our table that we love so' (*Adieu, notre petite table*). Des Grieux returns and finds her in a sad mood. As they have their supper he tells her of a dream he has had, a dream of happiness with her: 'Oh, moment sweet' (*Instant charmant*). He is interrupted by a knock on the door. Manon is distressed and asks him not to answer it. But he goes. Sounds of a scuffle are heard and he does not return.

ACT III

At the Cours-la-Reine, a place of promenading for fashionable Paris, street-vendors are crying their wares amid a general bustle. Poussette, Javotte and Rosette come out of a pavilion where they have been dancing. Lescaut arrives, makes some purchases and leaves. Guillot arrives and then de Brétigny, who speaks of Manon, with whom he is now living. Presently

Manon herself enters. She is much admired by all the men present and sings a coquettish song to them—expressing her mood in the gavotte ‘Let us enjoy the days of beauty’ (*Profitons bien de la jeunesse*).

Eventually Manon moves off to make some purchases. Meanwhile de Brétigny meets an old acquaintance, the Count des Grieux (father of Manon’s previous lover), who tells him that his son has gone to a seminary to train for the priesthood, after an unhappy love affair. Manon overhears part of their conversation and, with some embarrassment, questions the Count, pretending that his son’s lover was a friend of hers. The Count tells her that his son has now begun to overcome his unhappiness.

Guillot arrives, with some friends (including Lescaut) and the ballet dancers from the Opéra—brought by him to amuse and impress Manon, whom he in turn hopes to win from de Brétigny. Greeted by the crowds, the dancers perform a ballet. But Manon is uninterested, thinking only of des Grieux; she asks Lescaut to call her carriage and, to Guillot’s stupefaction, goes off to St. Sulpice.

The scene changes to the St. Sulpice seminary. Worshippers are gathered there, praising the oratory of ‘the Abbé des Grieux’. He enters and his father talks to him, trying to dissuade him from entering the priesthood. But he will not be dissuaded. Left alone, he sings of his new desire—to forget Manon and find heavenly peace: ‘Ah! Begone, vision fair’ (*Ah! fuyez, douce image*). He goes. Manon arrives at the seminary and, while the sound of prayer is heard from the chapel, she gives money to a porter who fetches des Grieux. In their long duet which follows, he at first rejects her and tries to send her away. But she begs him to have pity and eventually he gives way: he can no longer overcome his love for her, and they go off together.

ACT IV

At a gambling-hall in Paris, Lescaut, Poussette, Javotte and Rosette are among the crowds. Guillot enters, soon followed by Manon, who has brought des Grieux, against his better judgment. Manon and Lescaut try to persuade the unwilling des Grieux to retrieve his fortunes at the tables. Singing of her love for him, she eventually succeeds, and when Guillot challenges him to a game he agrees. They play, watched excitedly by Manon and the three girls, for extravagant stakes.

Des Grieux consistently wins, and at length Guillot rises from the table and suggests he has been cheated. Des Grieux challenges him, but order is restored and Guillot goes off, threatening the lovers. The agitated crowd points suspiciously at des Grieux. Soon there is a knock at the door: Guillot has returned with the police, to arrest des Grieux for cheating and Manon as his accomplice. Des Grieux’s indignation changes to remorse when his father enters. In an ensemble, Guillot rejoices in the prospect of

revenge while the others plead for mercy. The Count promises his son that he will soon be freed, but he has no pity for Manon; the two are separated and taken off.

ACT V

Des Grieux is waiting on the road to Le Havre, where Manon and other women are to be taken for deportation as prostitutes. Lescaut comes. They had hoped to hold up the convoy of deportees and rescue Manon, but the plan has gone awry. The soldiers approach with their charges. The sergeant says that one of the girls (Manon) is half-dead and Lescaut bribes him to let him take her away, promising to bring her back later.

Lescaut leaves her and des Grieux alone together. Des Grieux promises to contrive her rescue, but she is full of intense remorse. Her only consolation is a remembrance of their past happiness. Desperately ill, she has no strength left to escape; she dies, and with a cry des Grieux falls over her body.

* * *

In *Manon*, Massenet makes telling use of a number of recurring motives associated with his various characters, even though the work is made up of separate musical numbers. A feature of the score is the way in which, repeatedly, the orchestra takes on the role of commentator and itself utters the motives. This was enough to gain for the work the hostile label 'Wagnerian' from those who did not really appreciate Wagner. But, with the hindsight of today, we might just as reasonably relate this trait to Puccini's method, particularly in the way the orchestra proclaims, for example, de Brétigny's characteristic theme at the end of Act II—for although de Brétigny is now off-stage, this is 'his' act: during it, he has won Manon. His theme is:

Andante appassionato $\text{♩} = 126$
DE BRÉTIGNY

Voice

Ma - non! Ma - non!

Orch.

(Ex. 1)

Manon is a girl in pursuit not of money or power but of pleasure. She harbours no good-will or ill-will or any moral feeling. Her music has a

CLAUDE DEBUSSY

(1862-1918)

FOR part of his career, Debussy was a practising music critic as well as a composer, and what he wrote about other composers helps to define his own attitudes. Gluck he attacked as standing for 'Wagnerian formulas in embryo, which is unbearable'; Massenet and Gounod he defended, Bizet he exalted; Puccini and his Italian contemporaries he described as employing 'a film formula, whereby the characters fling themselves on one another and tear their melodies from each other's lips'; and one of Grieg's works was 'a pink bonbon filled with snow'. Most significant was his love-and-hate affair with 'the arch-poisoner, Wagner'. He enormously admired Wagner's musical genius and his harmonic boldness, but totally rejected his symphonic method of composing operas in a texture woven out of leading-motives. In Debussy's view, the attempt to parallel the dramatic development with musical development is undramatic: 'Either the music gets out of breath in running after a character, or else the character sits down on a note to allow the music to catch up with him.'¹

PELLÉAS ET MÉLISANDE

*Libretto: Maurice Maeterlinck's play, slightly adapted by
the composer*

First performed: Paris, 1902

Five Acts

Cast in order of singing:

Golaud, grandson of Arkel	baritone
Mélisande	soprano
Geneviève, Arkel's daughter-in-law, mother of Golaud and Pelléas	mezzo-soprano
Arkel, King of Allemonde	bass
Pelléas, grandson of Arkel, half-brother to Golaud	tenor

¹ These translations are by Oscar Thompson, from his book *Debussy, Man and Artist* (1937).

Yniold, Golaud's son by his first marriage	<i>soprano (or boy treble)</i>
A shepherd	<i>baritone</i>
A doctor	<i>bass</i>

The scene is laid in the imaginary kingdom of
Allemonde in medieval times

Debussy and the Belgian dramatist Maurice Maeterlinck (1862–1949) were born in the same year. Maeterlinck's play *Pelléas et Mélisande* (1892) immediately commended itself to Debussy for an opera: he set the actual text of the play (very slightly cut and altered), not a conventional opera libretto worked up from it. This must be one of the few operas with singing parts for four generations: Yniold is son to Golaud, who is son to Geneviève, who is daughter-in-law to Arkel. One other play by Maeterlinck gave rise to an opera of some success: *Ariane et Barbe-Bleue* (Ariadne and Bluebeard; 1899), set in 1907 by Paul Dukas (1865–1935).

Debussy wrote no other operas. He found nowhere else the inspiration which Maeterlinck had given him—the inspiration for a shadowy, legendary, understated tragic drama, in which the real and the symbolic intertwine, and in which the personages submit to fate. Ironically, Maeterlinck (after first having consented to the opera's being composed) publicly wished failure to the première: he had presumed that his wife would be chosen for the part of Mélisande, and she was not! The Scottish singer, Mary Garden, was.

The almost hypnotic, impressionistic appeal of Debussy's well-loved orchestral pieces—*The Afternoon of a Faun*, the *Nocturnes*—is felt too in this opera. There are no heroics, only the muted music suited to a remote kind of vision.

ACT I

In a forest, Mélisande is alone by a well. Golaud, who has been hunting in the forest and is now lost, chances upon her. He finds her trembling with fear and weeping: 'Do not touch me!' (*Ne me touchez pas!*), she says. It emerges that she has been hurt, though she will not tell him by whom. Visible at the bottom of the well is a golden crown that fell from her head while she was weeping. She wishes to stay in the forest alone, but he insists that she comes with him.

In a room in the royal castle, several months later, Geneviève is reading to her father-in-law King Arkel a letter from her son Golaud to her other son Pelléas, in which he tells his half-brother how he discovered Mélisande and eventually made her his wife. He has asked Pelléas to find out whether Arkel, who had intended him to make a different marriage, would forgive him and receive them. Arkel agrees to do so. Pelléas enters, asking his grandfather for permission to visit a dying friend but, as his own father is

ill and his brother just returning, Arkel tells him to wait, and to light the lamp signifying that Golaud's ship has permission to land.

Later, Golaud and Mélisande are understood to have landed. In front of the castle, Geneviève is in discussion with Mélisande. Pelléas enters and talks with them. In the distance the sound of boatmen in the harbour can be heard, and through the mist the ship which brought the newcomers can be seen setting sail again. Geneviève goes, leaving Pelléas to take Mélisande to the castle. In their brief moment alone together the seeds of love between them are sown.

ACT II

Pelléas and Mélisande are together by a well at a shaded spot in a park. Mélisande longs to touch the water but cannot reach. As she plays with the ring Golaud gave her she drops it in the well; soon it is beyond their grasp and irretrievably lost. What shall they tell Golaud? 'The truth!' (*La vérité!*) says Pelléas.

Back in a room in the castle, Golaud is in bed. He was hurt in a riding accident—at noon, just the moment the ring was lost. By his bedside, Mélisande tries to make him comfortable. Suddenly he sees that she is weeping: in response to his kindly questions, she says she is unhappy in the gloomy surroundings of the castle and asks to be taken away. Golaud takes her hand, and sees that the ring is missing. He is much distressed and sends her out, in the dark, with Pelléas, to a cave by the shore where she untruthfully says it slipped off.

Pelléas takes her down to the cave (so that she will at least be able to describe it to Golaud). It is sinister and dark, and Mélisande is frightened, especially when the light of the moon discloses three aged paupers asleep. Pelléas leads her off, determining to come back another time.

ACT III

Mélisande is by herself at a window of one of the towers of the castle, singing as she combs her long hair. Seeing her from the path below, Pelléas is entranced by her beauty. At his request she leans far out and he takes her hand; then her hair tumbles down and envelops him, filling him with excitement. Doves fly around them. He refuses to let go of the long, soft tresses: 'I am binding them' (*Je les noue, je les noue*), he sings. He finds they are caught in the branches of a tree; then Golaud comes, and tells them to stop playing childishly so late at night.

Golaud, alone with Pelléas, shows him the dank vaults of the castle and then leads him up to the terrace. There he tells Pelléas that he witnessed what happened the previous night and is disturbed by the relationship between Pelléas and Mélisande; he asks Pelléas to spend less time in her company, and mentions that she may soon become a mother.

In front of the castle, Golaud, plagued by jealous suspicions, asks his child Yniold what happens when Pelléas and Mélisande are together. The child's replies are innocent: they talk, he says, about a door, or a light, or how he (Yniold) will grow up into a big boy; once they kissed, when it was raining. There is nothing to anger Golaud, nothing to reassure him. A light goes on in Mélisande's room. Golaud holds Yniold up so that he can see in: Pelléas is there, he says, they are looking at one another, they are not close; but he begs to be put down, as this is hurting him. At length Golaud does so, and leads him off, deeply troubled.

ACT IV

In a room in the castle, Pelléas and Mélisande meet. He tells her that he has been with his ailing father, who is now rather stronger. His father has told him to go on a journey. They arrange to meet that evening by the well, and Pelléas goes out.

Arkel enters. He has noticed Mélisande's unhappiness in the gloomy surroundings and is anxious about her. Then Golaud comes in, with blood on his forehead. Speaking angrily to Mélisande, he asks for his sword. He comments on her large, beautiful eyes; Arkel sees in them only 'a great innocence'. But Golaud derides her 'innocence'. Becoming more and more angry and agitated, he eventually seizes her by her hair, pulls her to her knees and drags her across the room in a passionate, jealous rage. Arkel stops him: he suddenly feigns calmness, while Mélisande weeps pitifully: 'I am not happy!' (*Je ne suis pas heureuse!*).

By the well in the park, Yniold is playing. The bleating of sheep is heard as a shepherd and his flock pass near by: the sheep are suddenly silent as the shepherd directs them away from their accustomed fold (they are to be slaughtered). Yniold goes. Pelléas arrives, soliloquizing: he understands now that he and Mélisande are deeply in love and that he must go away as soon as possible, to live only on his fading memories of her. Mélisande arrives. First he and then she admit their love: 'Jet'aime' ... 'Jet'aime aussi.' It is dark and they can scarcely see one another. In the distance they hear the castle doors being barred and know that they are now certain to be discovered: 'All is lost, all is won!' (*Tout est perdu, tout est sauvé!*). They embrace. A moment later they hear and see Golaud, watching near by; they keep calm, reconciled to the inevitable; as he comes they embrace, passionately, then again, still more passionately, for the last time. Golaud leaps at them, killing Pelléas, while Mélisande flees in terror.

ACT V

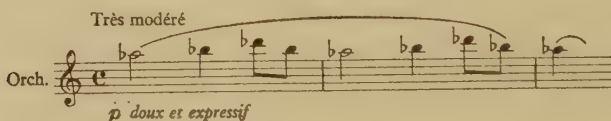
In a room in the castle, Mélisande is ill in bed, watched over by a doctor, Arkel and Golaud. She was wounded by Golaud, but the wound, the doctor says, is very slight, and not the cause of her illness. She has also given

birth to a child. Golaud is repentant; he now believes that their embraces were not those of guilty lovers. She becomes conscious, but answers Arkel only vaguely. Golaud asks to be left alone with her. He begs for forgiveness, which she, not really comprehending, readily grants; then he asks whether her love with Pelléas was guilty, which she denies, but he presses her again and she returns to half-consciousness. Arkel comes in with the physician and talks to her, showing her the baby, which she is too weak to hold.

The servants silently assemble along the walls. Golaud again becomes impassioned and demands to be left alone with his dying wife. Arkel tries to calm him. The servants all fall to their knees as Mélisande's life ebbs away, and Arkel quietly observes her final tranquillity.



There are musical themes related to particular characters in *Pelléas et Mélisande*, of which we may instance the oboe theme before the curtain rises, which is to be associated with Mélisande (and last returns, also on the oboe, as she dies at the very end of the opera):



(Ex. 1)

But—here we quote from the most authoritative Wagner scholar, Ernest Newman, in his *Opera Nights* (1943):

‘It is characteristic of Debussy’s entirely non-Wagnerian way of handling his motives that he should use the motive of Mélisande to accompany both her own words descriptive of Golaud, “Oh, your hair is so grey” and Golaud’s remark about herself, “I am looking at your eyes. Do you never close your eyes?” Wagner would have shuddered at the thought of employing Mélisande’s motive when it was a case of describing Golaud!’

The declaration of love between Pelléas and Mélisande (Act IV) is in a sense both the climax of the opera and the ultimate expression of Debussy’s method. At the opposite pole from conventionally rapturous, expansive operatic declarations of love we have Pelléas’s low-toned confession: ‘You do not know that it’s because . . .’—and then he breaks off, inconsequentially as lovers do, to utter the crucial words. Mélisande follows him at the same level of pitch, an extraordinary effect:

[Modéré]
PELLÉAS

[Actual pitch]

MÉLISANDE

Voice

[p] Tu . ne sais pas que c'est par-ce-que... Je t'ai-me Je t'ai-me aus-si...

Orch.

[p] cresc. *librement* *f*

(Ex. 2)

Notice the orchestral part with its repetition and variation of harmony. The placing of words in short, conversation-like phrases (the antithesis of soaring Italian melody) also plays a notable part in the dramatic expression, as in Mélisande's 'He doesn't love me any more—I am not happy' in the previous scene:

Lent
MÉLISANDE

[p] Non, non, mais il ne m'ai-me plus

Je ne suis pas heu-reu-se

(Ex. 3)

The harmonic language of the opera—especially sequences of block chords outside the usual harmonic relationships—owes something to Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov*, a score of which came into Debussy's hands in Paris about 1893.

VIII
BEDŘICH SMETANA
(1824-84)

DEBUSSY'S opera shows an element of positive revolt against conventional notions of what opera should be. We turn back now to an earlier phenomenon of musical revolt: the desire of Czech and Russian composers to establish their own national music, often *against* the conventions of Italian opera and German symphony. Such revolutionary ideals in music often went along in sympathy with revolutionary politics too—as in the case of Smetana, now regarded as the founder of a Czech national style in concert-hall and opera-house.

Sympathizing with Czech national feeling against the dominion of the Austrian Empire, Smetana found the atmosphere of Prague oppressive after the crushing of the abortive revolution of 1848. He worked in Sweden from 1856 to 1861, but returned when an easing of Austrian rule made it possible for the Czechs to found in Prague a theatre for plays and opera in their own language. Smetana's work became the cornerstone of Czech opera and still remains so. But though all his eight operas are cherished by his countrymen, only *The Bartered Bride* entered the international repertory and remains there.

The operas of Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904) are also chiefly the preserve of Czechoslovak theatres, though *Rusalka* (1901) is occasionally heard elsewhere: the title-role is that of a water-nymph.

THE BARTERED BRIDE
Prodaná Nevěsta
Libretto by Karel Sabina
First performed: Prague, 1866
Three Acts

Cast in order of singing:

Jeník, a peasant, son of Mícha by his first wife
Mařenka, daughter of Krušina and Ludmila
Kecal, a marriage-broker

tenor
soprano
bass

Krušina, a peasant	baritone
Ludmila, his wife	soprano
Vášek, son of Mícha by his second wife	tenor
The manager of a troupe of strolling players	tenor
Esmeralda, a dancer	{ soprano bass
The Indian	
Háta, Mícha's second wife	mezzo-soprano
Mícha, a landlord	bass

Chorus of villagers, actors and children

The scene is laid in a Bohemian village, on the Patron
Saint's day, in the first half of the nineteenth century

Lively rustic jollification, with catchy airs and invigorating dances—this, rather than any dramatic subtlety or opportunity for vocal fireworks, is provided by *The Bartered Bride*. We give this opera the title fixed by custom, but the Czech would be more literally rendered as 'The Sold Fiancée'.

ACT I

The exuberant overture sets the mood for the opening scene: a village with an inn and—for it is a festive day—a fair. Among the cheerful villagers only Mařenka is sad. Her sweetheart, Jeník, asks why: because her parents are planning her marriage with a man she cannot love, she tells him—Vášek, the half-wit son of Mícha. Jeník, she feels, does not show sufficient concern; she asks him whether his mysterious past includes a love-affair. He reassures her, explaining that he was turned out after his father's second marriage: 'A cruel stepmother's nothing but a curse!' (Takž kletbou macecha zlá).¹ They sing about the strength of their love and their confidence in the future.

They go off and Mařenka's parents, Krušina and Ludmila, enter with Kecal, a marriage-broker, who is haranguing them about keeping to the bargain they have made. The husband, he says, is to be Mícha's son—not the good-for-nothing one who disappeared, but Vášek: in the solo and trio which follow he assures them to their satisfaction that although the boy is a bit slow and odd he has every other virtue in abundance.

Mařenka enters. They tell her what they are planning, but Ludmila makes it clear that they will not insist on the marriage without Mařenka's consent. Mařenka objects that she has a lover to whom she has sworn fidelity. Confident of overcoming this trifling obstacle, Kecal determines to go off to the inn to have a word with her lover, Jeník, but is not entirely pleased when Krušina decides that Mařenka should at least meet Vášek to see if she likes him.

¹ English version by Joan Cross and Eric Crozier (Boosey & Hawkes).

The scene changes to the village inn, where young people dance and sing in a lively polka.

ACT II

At the inn, the young men are singing in praise of beer, while Jeník praises love; Kecal, watching them, praises only money. They dance a Furiant. Then Vašek enters—a ridiculous, stuttering figure. Mařenka arrives. She tells Vašek (who does not know her) that everyone pities him for having to marry such a disagreeable girl as Mařenka, especially as someone else is pining for him—implying it is herself. She runs off, with him in pursuit.

Kecal approaches Jeník, promising to find him a rich wife and, in a duet, emphasizes the importance of money in marriage. Then he offers Jeník a hundred crowns to give up Mařenka. When the offer has trebled, Jeník agrees—on condition that Mařenka marries no one other than Mícha's eldest son. While Kecal goes to draw up the contract with this added clause, Jeník expresses his surprise that the broker could imagine that he would give her up so readily. Kecal returns with the contract, and with Krušina and many villagers as witnesses, Jeník signs. All are astonished and disgusted that he should have bartered his bride-to-be so readily.

ACT III

Vašek, alone on the village green, anxiously bewails his prospective fate as husband of the terrible Mařenka. A group of strolling players is about to perform and their manager calls out all the attractions. The 'Dance of the Show-people' (or 'of the Comedians') follows. Vašek is interested by the troupe, especially by Esmeralda, the Spanish dancer. The Indian in the troupe comes to the manager with news that the man who plays the dancing bear is drunk. Esmeralda, with hints of love, entices Vašek to take his place and she and the manager start showing him what he has to do.

Vašek's parents, Mícha and Háta, arrive with Kecal, who has the marriage contract. To their consternation, Vašek refuses to sign because of what he has heard about Mařenka. Mařenka, distraught at Jeník's apparent perfidy, enters with her parents, who, with Kecal and Vašek's parents in support, try to obtain her signature to the contract. Vašek, who had wandered off, is called back, and he recognizes Mařenka as the girl who spoke to him in the morning; he is now willing to sign, but Mařenka wants time to think it over. The four parents and Kecal agree to leave her alone for a few minutes. She sings, with bitter nostalgia, of her dreams of happiness with Jeník.

Jeník enters. Mařenka will not hear a word from him, cutting off contemptuously all his efforts to explain. In a lively duet he complains of her

obstinacy, while she upbraids him. Kecal arrives. Jeník mentions the clause in the contract about her marrying Mícha's son, gently assuring her that Mícha's son will always love her. Kecal heartily approves and Mařenka is still more disillusioned.

The villagers and the four parents return and ask Mařenka what she has decided: to annoy Jeník, she says, she will marry Vašek. All congratulate her, including Jeník himself. Háta and Mícha are disconcerted to see him—especially when Jeník greets Mícha as his father (the significance of the added clause now becomes clear). Kecal too is taken aback. Háta sneers at Jeník, but Mařenka, free to choose and at last realizing what has happened, of course chooses Jeník, to Kecal's annoyance and Háta's fury. The villagers join in the laughter at Kecal's expense.

Suddenly there are cries of confusion, as a 'bear' appears. It is Vašek, to Háta's rage and embarrassment. She leads him off, while Ludmila, Krušina, Mícha and the villagers congratulate the united lovers.

* * *

Though the plot of *The Bartered Bride* hangs so perilously on one improbability (why does Jeník not *tell* Mařenka of his plan?), the opera lives by the racy cut of its melodies. They are closely related to those of the dance, even when not actually danced to on the stage. Smetana's gift was to find a great variety of exact musical characterizations, all within this melodic type.

Kecal the marriage-broker is the confident businessman, seemingly sharper than these village folk but really not so sharp as he thinks:

Allegro vivo $\text{♩} = 152$
KECAL

Voice *f* As I said be - fore, old fel - low, you gave your

Orch. *f*

prom - ise, so now you'll have to keep it

(Ex. 1)

Note the *sforzando* slaps-on-the-back in the orchestra!

Vášek stutters nervously, opening his song like this—and again, note the orchestral accompaniment with its continuation of the stuttering (bar 5):

Moderato $\text{♩} = 80$
 VÁŠEK *mf*

Voice *Ma ma told me her - self*

Orch. [*mf*]

(Ex. 2)

Though hero and heroine are allowed their music of real sentiment, even they are perhaps most memorably caught in the bickering duet of the last act. The tune is one which is naturally performed with a pulling-back of the rhythm at first and then a gradual resumption of tempo:

Moderato assai
 JENÍK

Voice [*mf*] *Oh what a fool - ish girl you are to shut your ears like that, now*

(Ex. 3)

But to deduce that the score uses only a simple kind of music would be wrong. The cleverness of Smetana's art may be seen in the echoing of voices (not strictly in canon) in the lovers' Act I duet, and in the similar give-and-take in Kecal's and Jeník's matchmaking duet in Act II, which in the theatre is perhaps the most taking number in the whole score.

LEOŠ JANÁČEK

(1854-1928)

LIKE Smetana, Leoš Janáček is considered by his countrymen an intensely national composer. At first his works made little international headway, but after the Second World War his operas became prominent in the theatres of German-speaking countries and three of them reached London at this time—*Katya Kabanova* and *The Cunning Little Vixen* (1924) at Sadler's Wells, and *Jenůfa* (1904) at Covent Garden. Of Janáček's other seven operas the two most important are the two last: *The Makropoulos Case* (1926) and *From the House of the Dead* (staged posthumously, 1930). The former reached Sadler's Wells in 1964.

Janáček set Czech words in a naturalistic idiom based on speech rhythms, as Mussorgsky had with Russian words. He was also influenced by Russian literature: *Katya Kabanova* is based on the play *The Storm* by Ostrovsky—a play to which Tchaikovsky wrote incidental music.

KATYA KABANOVA

Libretto by V. Cervinka after the play by Ostrovsky

First performed: Brno, 1921

Three Acts

Cast in order of singing:

Vanya Kudrash, teacher and chemist	<i>tenor</i>
Glasha, a servant to the Kabanov family	<i>mezzo-soprano</i>
Savel Prokofievich Dikoy, a merchant	<i>bass</i>
Boris Grigorievich, his nephew	<i>tenor</i>
Feklusha, a servant to the Kabanov family	<i>mezzo-soprano</i>
Marfa Ignatyevna Kabanova (known as Kabanikha), widow of a wealthy merchant	<i>contralto</i>
Tikhon Ivanovich Kabanov, her son	<i>tenor</i>
Katerina (Katya) Kabanova, his wife	<i>soprano</i>
Varvara, adopted daughter of the Kabanov family	<i>mezzo-soprano</i>
Kuligin, a friend of Kudrash	<i>baritone</i>

Chorus of people

The scene is laid in the town of Kalinov
on the Volga in the 1860s

The storm which rages through the small Russian town of Kalinov echoes the storm in the mind of Katya—married to a weak husband under the thumb of his cruel mother, and guiltily in love with a man too weak to rescue her. The tortured mind of Katya is contrasted with the carefree youthfulness of Varvara, the adopted daughter in the household of Katya's mother-in-law; and their music contributes to a strange but compelling atmosphere in which the cruelties and torments of small-town life find subtle operatic expression.

The Czech title of the opera is correctly written *Kát'a Kabanová*. But as this (and the other names in the Czech score) are merely Czech spellings of the Russian names of the original Russian play, we give here the usual English forms for the original Russian spelling.

ACT I

By the Kabanov family house on the banks of the Volga, Kudrash sits watching the river, talking to the Kabanovs' servant Glasha. They move aside as Dikoy and Boris enter; as usual, Dikoy is rating his nephew. Dikoy leaves and Boris talks with Kudrash, explaining that he has to live with his uncle in order that he may eventually inherit a legacy. People are returning from church, among them Feklusha, another servant of the Kabanovs, who talks to Glasha. Boris confides his unhappiness to Kudrash, and his eyes are fixed on Katya Kabanova, returning with her husband Tikhon from church. Boris is, as he confesses, in love with her.

Tikhon is under the thumb of his mother, known as Kabanikha, who tells him he should go away at once on business. She reprimands him for treating her with little affection since his marriage, but he protests his love and respect of her, and Katya does likewise. Kabanikha turns fiercely on Katya, who goes into the house; she follows, after warning her son to act more sternly towards his wife. Varvara expresses to Tikhon her pity for Katya.

The scene changes to a room in the Kabanov house, where Katya is talking to Varvara about how sad she has become lately and recalls her carefree younger days. Growing agitated, she mentions her guilty love for another man. Varvara asks if she will meet the man while Tikhon is away, an idea she at once rejects. Tikhon enters, followed by Glasha and Feklusha. Katya begs him not to leave her, and when he says he must go she begs him to take her with him. Despite her repeated pleas, Tikhon is only irritated, and refuses. Desperately, she asks him to make her swear not to speak to any stranger.

Kabanikha interrupts, entering to say that all is ready for his departure. She demands that Tikhon should tell his wife how to behave in his absence; reluctantly and with embarrassment, he does so, following his mother's instructions, to Katya's deep humiliation. Before he leaves, they

sit down for a moment together, following Russian custom. As he kisses Katya goodbye, she embraces him passionately—to Kabanikha's disgust.

ACT II

It is evening, and as Kabanikha, Katya and Varvara work at their embroidery Kabanikha rebukes Katya for not showing more obvious grief at her husband's departure. Kabanikha leaves and Varvara announces her intention of going out—she has obtained the key of the locked garden gate, and offers to summon Boris to meet Katya. Katya, much agitated, rejects the idea; but left alone (with Kabanikha's voice briefly heard from outside) she decides that she will see him, only for a moment, and she goes. A moment later Kabanikha enters with Dikoy, who is maudlin drunk; Kabanikha comforts him.

Later that evening in the wooded garden behind the Kabanov house, Kudrash is alone, singing a serenade and playing his guitar as he waits for Varvara. Boris enters; a girl, he says, had come up to him and told him to come for an assignation. Kudrash warns him of the dangers of loving a married woman. Soon Varvara approaches, singing a song by which her sweetheart will know her; joyously, Kudrash answers her in song. Varvara tells Boris that Katya will come, and goes off with Kudrash. Boris waits anxiously. Soon Katya arrives. She is still tortured by her conscience, but eventually gives way to her emotions; they embrace and go off together, just as Varvara and Kudrash return. Their loving voices are heard in the distance, while Varvara and Kudrash talk, then sing another happy song. It serves to call Katya back, for the time has come for the women to go in. Boris and Katya part wordlessly, too moved even to bid one another goodnight.

ACT III

It is a stormy afternoon and people are hurrying to shelter in a large, decrepit building near the river bank. Kudrash and his friend Kuligin watch. Dikoy enters, everyone making way for him; Kudrash tries to persuade him of the value of lightning conductors, which he dismisses angrily, irritated by Kudrash's scientific and irreligious attitude to the elements. A moment later Boris comes in, then Varvara, who anxiously tells Boris that Katya, with her husband now returned, is almost deranged by her sense of guilt. The storm goes on and Katya, Tikhon and Kabanikha come in. Boris conceals himself. Katya's overwrought state is observed by the crowd and by Dikoy, who comment on it and on her beauty. She notices Boris, and can bear it no longer; she bursts out with a desperate confession of her guilty love, and rushes off.

At a deserted spot by the Volga, night is falling as Tikhon and Glasha, carrying a lantern, come searching for Katya. Tikhon, though he still

loves her, talks of the punishment she deserves. As they move off, Varvara and Kudrash enter. Varvara is full of foreboding; she agrees to go away with him, and they depart. In the distance, Tikhon's and Glasha's voices are heard calling Katya. Just then she enters, from the opposite direction; she only wishes now to see Boris once again. Kuligin passes and mysterious, wordless voices are heard from afar. Katya speaks wildly, wishing half for death, half to see Boris again. Then Boris enters. They embrace passionately, and talk of the future: Boris has been sent away by his uncle, and Katya will have to bear the taunts of her mother-in-law and the town. Boris goes. The distant voices are heard again. Katya, utterly distraught, throws herself into the river. People quickly gather—Kuligin, a passer-by, then Dikoy, Glasha, Tikhon and Kabanikha. 'You killed my wife!' says Tikhon bitterly to his mother, who prevents him from diving in after Katya. The body is pulled out of the river and Dikoy places it on the bank, where Tikhon falls upon it. Kabanikha formally thanks the people present for their kind assistance.

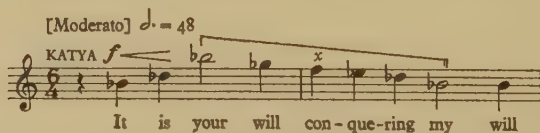
* * *

Janáček's realistic setting of Czech words—realistic in the sense that it flows in irregular patterns, like the prose of ordinary speech—is complemented by his similarly 'irregular', asymmetrical, and subtle treatment of recurring motives. In the first scene as Boris begins to divulge to Kudrash his love for Katya a little theme steals in first high on the oboe, then repeated by violins; then, when Katya herself enters with her husband and family (orchestra without voices), the flute takes it over:



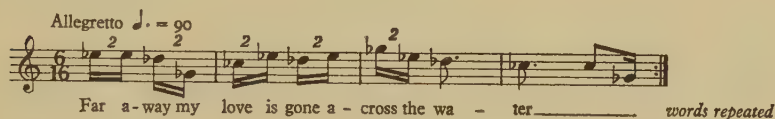
(Ex. 1)

This symbolizes not only Boris's love for Katya but also hers for him, and recurs with that dual significance. Note the similar phrase 'x' at the point when, in the garden, she finally lets her passion express itself to Boris:



(Ex. 2)

The strongest contrast with this idiom is provided by the songs (that is, musical material sung *as* interpolated songs) given to the 'happy' pair of lovers in the garden scene. They are in the spirit of Czech folksong and one (the first 'answering'-duet) has a dance-like beat but an unexpected five-bar rhythm:



(Ex. 3)

English version by Norman Tucker (Universal).

ALEXANDER BORODIN

(1833-87)

THE first Russian operas to become internationally famous were those of Mikhail Ivanovich Glinka (1804-57): *A Life for the Tsar* (1836, now performed in Russia under Glinka's intended title, 'Ivan Sussanin') and *Russlan and Ludmila* (1842). The nationalist-historical element in the first and Russian legendary element in the second were prophetic of much that was to follow in Russian opera. So were the literary inspiration of Pushkin (in *Russlan and Ludmila*) and Glinka's use of musical elements drawn from Russian folksong.

Borodin, like Mussorgsky and Rimsky-Korsakov (see below, pages 257 and 268), was a member of the nationalist group of composers called 'The Five' or 'The Mighty Handful'. A professor of chemistry, he had a severely limited time available for music; but the fact that his only opera, *Prince Igor*, was left unfinished at his death appears partly due to other reasons. For nearly five years he left it almost untouched. It was completed after his death by his close associates, Rimsky-Korsakov and Alexander Glazunov (1865-1936): the overture was written out and orchestrated by Glazunov, to whom Borodin had often played it on the piano.

PRINCE IGOR

(Knyaz Igor)

Libretto by the composer

First performed: St Petersburg, 1890

Prologue and Four Acts

Cast in order of singing:

Igor, prince of Seversk	<i>baritone</i>
Prince Galitzky, his brother-in-law	<i>bass</i>
Skula } players of the gudok ¹ and deserters from	<i>bass</i>
Yeroshka } Igor's army	<i>tenor</i>
Yaroslavna, Igor's second wife	<i>soprano</i>
A nurse in Yaroslavna's household	<i>soprano</i>
A Polovtsian maiden	<i>soprano</i>

¹ An old Russian bowed instrument with three strings.

Konchakovna, daughter of Khan Konchak

mezzo-soprano

Vladimir, Igor's son by his first marriage

tenor

Ovlur, a baptized Polovtsian soldier

tenor

Khan Konchak, a prince of the Polovtsi

bass

[The role of Khan Gzak is silent.]

Chorus of Russians and Polovtsi (soldiers, people, prisoners, etc.)

The scene is laid in Putivl (a town of the Seversk region) and in
the camp of the Polovtsi, in 1185

Prince Igor sketches, in bold musical contours, a tale of war and peace, honour and dishonour. It makes dramatic and musical use of the picturesqueness of the orient, sometimes for barbaric effect. Its story is set in the twelfth century when Russia—at that time a loose federation of principalities—was under pressure from the Tatars. The Tatar (otherwise Mongol) power, known as the 'Khanate of the Golden Horde', became even stronger in the next century and actually established sovereignty over Russia. The Polovtsi were one of these Tatar peoples.

In the opera, Prince Igor, ruling at Putivl, leads the Russians; he falls prisoner to Konchak, one of the Khans (princes) who rule the Polovtsi. The Russians are Christians (they were converted about 990); the Polovtsi are pagan, but among them is one, Ovlur, who has accepted Christianity and treacherously offers to help Igor escape.

It is an opera of spectacle, especially in the famous Polovtsian Dances with chorus, which end the second act. Dramatically, it displays noble enemies in opposition. The three leading male characters—Igor, Konchak, Galitzky—are baritone, bass and bass, which lends a distinctive vocal colour to the score; and frequently the same singer doubles the two bass roles.

PROLOGUE

Outside the cathedral in Putivl, Prince Igor is acclaimed as he prepares to march to war against the Polovtsian Khans. An eclipse of the sun takes place, which Galitzky (Igor's brother-in-law) and others regard as a bad omen. Igor nevertheless sets out amid further acclaim. Two merry ne'er-do-wells, Skula and Yeroshka, desert from Igor's army, preferring to serve under Galitzky and avoid a foreign campaign. Igor bids farewell to his sorrowing wife Yaroslavna; his son Vladimir, who is to serve with his father, joins in. Igor appoints Galitzky to rule in his absence, then sets off on horseback with his army.

ACT I

In Galitzky's home his retainers are rejoicing, Yeroshka and Skula among them. Now that Igor is away, Galitzky too rejoices. If only he were really

the ruling prince, what a gay reign would be his! A group of girls enters to complain that one of their number has been abducted by Galitzky's men. He refuses to give her up, and leaves. Skula and Yeroshka mock the petitioners, then embark on a drinking song with chorus in Galitzky's honour. They and their fellows wish Galitzky were their real ruler.

Meanwhile, in her home, Igor's wife Yaroslavna pines for her husband. Introduced by a nurse, the girls who have vainly implored Galitzky's justice now ask Yaroslavna's help. They leave, and Galitzky enters: Yaroslavna argues with him fiercely until he promises to free the abducted girl. He leaves.

A group of noblemen enters with sad tidings for Yaroslavna: her husband and his men are prisoners of the Polovtsi. Moreover, the alarm bells sound even now and distant fires are seen; the enemy is marching on Putivl.

ACT II

In the camp of the Polovtsi, at evening, young girls are singing (with solo) and dancing. Konchakovna, the daughter of the Khan Konchak, is looking forward to seeing the man she loves. She tells the girls to give food and drink to a group of Russian prisoners-of-war who now enter. A patrol of Polovtsian soldiers, providing guards for the night, sings and departs—except Ovlur, a Christian convert among the Polovtsi. He remains on guard, unobserved, when Vladimir (a prisoner like his father) enters and calls for his beloved. It is Konchakovna. She enters: they declare their love for one another and leave.

Igor himself appears, singing of his longing to be free. Ovlur discloses himself and offers to help Igor escape; but Igor, deeming such behaviour dishonourable, declines.

Konchak enters, treating his captive as an esteemed noble guest, offering him treasure and slave-girls, and asking him to stay and become his ally—or to go home, on condition of not renewing the war. Igor declines the condition. Konchak admires his honourable behaviour, and entertains his guest with male and female dancers and singers (the Polovtsian Dances).

ACT III

A march introduces a scene in the Polovtsian camp. The Polovtsi (basses) hail the arrival of the men of an allied army (tenors) under Khan Gzak. Konchak proclaims the success of the campaign. The victors leave for a feast, after which they will decide on the next military steps. The Russian prisoners, downcast, believe that only if Igor were free could a Russian force turn back their enemies.

The Polovtsian soldiers guarding the prisoners begin to sing and

dance; they become drunk and fall down, asleep. Ovlur enters, and this time Igor (realizing his countrymen's dependence on him) accepts his help: he and his son will try to escape.

Konchakovna enters, seeking to persuade Vladimir to stay while his father urges their departure. Vladimir decides to leave with his father—but, as they try to make their escape, the love-sick Konchakovna raises the alarm. The Polovtsi, with Konchak following, rush in. Igor has escaped but Vladimir is recaptured. Konchak gives his orders: let Vladimir be free, and marry his daughter, but let the guards who permitted the escape be hanged. The crowd hails Konchak and the coming campaign.

ACT IV

Seated atop the city walls of Putivl, Yaroslavna laments the plight of her people and herself. A group of countryfolk appears, having fled before the oncoming Khans. But Yaroslavna sees a Russian prince approaching, ready to lead the defence of the city. She recognizes him: it is Igor. They embrace.

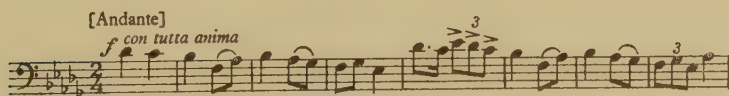
Yeroshka and Skula, tipsy and playing their gudoks, enter with a song about the happiness they have been enjoying while Igor has been a captive—only to behold him there, in conversation with his wife as he enters the citadel. They decide that it is not worth running away and instead start sounding the bells to announce Igor's return. The crowd assembles joyfully. All acclaim Igor as he and his wife emerge in state from the citadel, ready to lead the people once more.

* * *

The celebrated overture contains some of the most stirring tunes of the opera. The rapid alternation of trumpets comes from the reunion of the triumphant Polovtsi and their allies in Act III; and two bold tunes which come later are both taken from Igor's soliloquy in Act II. They are:



(Ex. 1)



(Ex. 2)

The 'oriental' element in the music, familiar in the concert-hall in the

Polovtsian Dances, is also reflected in the music of Konchakovna. Her invocation to the absent Vladimir in Act IV:

Largo $\text{♩} = 48$
 KONCHAKOVNA
a piacere

Voice

Ah, now — I wait, Ah, — on-ly for you!

Orch. [*mp*] *rit.* *mf*

(Ex. 3)

uses one characteristic melodic interval (in this case from D sharp to C natural) which also served Verdi as an orientalism in *Aida*.

MODEST MUSSORGSKY

(1839-81)

MUSSORGSKY was a Russian army officer and later an unimportant civil servant. He did not study music systematically and the composer's technique which he forged was very much his own. But his willingness to tolerate a certain roughness of sound, without the gloss that might have been brought by academic training, fitted his desire to reproduce Russian speech-inflexions in his music and to use the folk-music idioms of the Russian people.

Mussorgsky's masterpiece is the opera *Boris Godunov*. Out of mistaken devotion, his friend Rimsky-Korsakov applied himself after Mussorgsky's death to 'correcting' what he conceived to be crudities in the score of the opera; but Rimsky-Korsakov's version, though persisting by the sheer indolence of some singers and opera companies, is now recognized as falsifying Mussorgsky's conception.

Living a disorderly life, succumbing to drink, and dying early, Mussorgsky left his other operas unfinished; they therefore *had* to come under someone else's hand if any were to be produced. *The Khovansky Affair* (in Russian, *Khovanshchina*) was completed and characteristically retouched by Rimsky-Korsakov, and produced in 1886; a later completion, truer to Mussorgsky, has been made by Shostakovich. *Sorochintsy Fair*, left much less complete, has been finished in at least four different versions by different hands; *The Marriage*, also left very incomplete, was not performed until 1931 in Moscow in a version finished by Mikhail Ippolitov-Ivanov (1859-1935).

BORIS GODUNOV

Libretto by the composer, after Pushkin

First performed: St. Petersburg, 1874

Prologue and Four Acts

Cast in order of singing:

A police officer

Mityukha, one of the crowd in Moscow

Shchelkalov, secretary of the State Council

Prince Shuisky, a leader of the nobles

baritone

bass

baritone

tenor

Boris Godunov, Tsar	<i>baritone</i>
Pimen, a monk and chronicler	<i>bass</i>
Grigori, afterwards known as Dmitri, the Pretender	<i>tenor</i>
Hostess of an inn	<i>mezzo-soprano</i>
Missail } vagabond monks	{ <i>tenor</i>
Varlaam }	{ <i>bass</i>
An officer	<i>bass</i>
Xenia, Boris's daughter	<i>soprano</i>
Fyodor, Boris's son (a young child)	<i>mezzo-soprano</i>
Nurse to Boris's children	<i>contralto</i>
A boyar (nobleman) in waiting	<i>tenor</i>
Marina Mniszek, a Polish princess	<i>soprano</i>
Rangoni, her confessor, a Jesuit	<i>bass</i>
A simpleton	<i>tenor</i>
Lavitzky } Jesuits	{ <i>bass</i>
Chernikovsky }	{ <i>bass</i>
Krushchov, a nobleman	<i>bass</i>

Chorus of Russian people, boyars, Poles, etc.

The scene is laid in Russia and Poland in 1598-1605

Boris Godunov himself—a Tsar tormented not only by political intrigue but by his own conscience—is one of opera's most subtle and most commanding roles. Yet neither Boris nor anyone else is allowed to dominate Mussorgsky's opera. We are shown a slice of history, and in history rulers come and go like other mortals. Historical fact is at the basis of Pushkin's chronicle-play (in twenty-four scenes) on which the opera is founded. Boris Godunov reigned as Tsar from 1598 to 1605. In 1604 a pretender arose who claimed to be Dmitri, the supposedly murdered son of a previous Tsar. He gained support among the Poles, intriguing with the Polish princess Marina Mniszek, and eventually usurped the throne for a brief period.

The opera is concerned with Boris's coronation, his guilty conscience, his relationship with his children, and his death; and with Dmitri (here depicted as a runaway monk, Grigori), and his relationship with Marina and his bid for the throne. Another major participant is the People—buffeted by political change, compelled to cheer when the police order it, breaking out in wild acts of rough justice, and producing the symbolic, pathetic figure of the Simpleton (or the Idiot, as he is sometimes called).

Originally Mussorgsky gave his opera no love-interest and Marina did not appear. This original version (1868-9) had only seven scenes; the last scene showed the death of Boris, and the previous one was set outside St. Basil's Cathedral in Moscow, introducing the Simpleton.

In this form the opera was rejected by the organization of the Imperial

Theatres in St. Petersburg. Mussorgsky thereupon expanded and revised his scheme. He rewrote the scene for Boris and his children; he put in a 'Polish act', bringing in Marina; he scrapped the scene outside St. Basil's; and *after* the death of Boris he placed a new scene, set in a wood clearing near Kromy, introducing the Simpleton here instead.

This revised version (1871-2) is regarded as the definitive one: the synopsis which follows corresponds to it. It was slightly cut by the composer in a vocal score published in 1874. There is a case for performing either this definitive version or the earlier, more terse version (without the love-interest). There is no case for performing the score as 'arranged' by Rimsky-Korsakov, that is, not only with Mussorgsky's harmonies and orchestration altered, but with the death of Boris *following* the scene near Kromy—a scene which, as we have noted, Mussorgsky expressly composed to come *after* Boris's death.

PROLOGUE

Outside the Novodevichy monastery in Moscow, the crowd, in obedience to a policeman, utters lamentations. Inside is Boris Godunov, who—as Shchelkalov, secretary of the State Council, now declares sadly—has declined the throne, despite the wishes of the nobles and clergy. A band of pilgrims arrives and enters the monastery. The police officer orders the crowd to appear at the Kremlin at dawn next day.

Next day the people are assembled in the courtyard of the Kremlin. Shuisky hails Boris, who has at last consented to become Tsar and now emerges, crowned. He speaks, revealing his troubled mind. The people hail him.

ACT I

In a monastery at Chudov, by night, an old monk, Pimen, is writing a chronicle of Russia. Dawn nears; the chanting of monks is heard. Grigori Otrepyev, a young monk sleeping in the cell, awakens. He asks and receives Pimen's blessing, then speaks of a dream that haunts him; he sees a crowd in Moscow pointing with scorn at him. Pimen speaks of how he himself saw, twelve years before, the body of the young Prince Dmitri, son of the late Tsar, who had been killed by order of the usurping Boris Godunov. Grigori (with cries of 'Boris, Boris!') is strongly impressed—and Pimen has mentioned that, were Dmitri still alive, he would be just of Grigori's age.

In a roadside inn, the hostess is singing to herself. Travellers arrive: two vagabond monks, Missail and Varlaam, followed by Grigori, who is now in peasant's clothes. The monks drink. Varlaam sings a racy song, 'By the walls of Kazan' (Kak vo gorode bilo vo Kazani),¹ about the military

¹ English by M. D. Calvocoressi (O.U.P.).

exploits of Tsar Ivan. Grigori is restive: planning to pose as Dmitri and to claim the Russian throne, he wants first of all to cross the nearby frontier into Lithuania (part of the kingdom of Poland at this time).

Frontier guards knock, enter, and announce that they have a warrant for the arrest of one Grigori (short form, Grishka) Otrepyev. The illiterate guard hands the warrant to Grigori who reads out the description of the wanted man, but falsely, to make it correspond to Varlaam. Eventually Varlaam himself manages to read it out correctly, but in the nick of time Grigori escapes.

ACT II

In a room in the Kremlin, Boris's daughter, Xenia, is weeping for her dead fiancé. Her young brother Fyodor is engrossed by a mechanical clock. The old nurse tries to comfort Xenia with a song about a gnat. After another song (by the nurse and Fyodor) Boris suddenly enters. Xenia and the nurse leave; Fyodor with a globe proudly shows his father the Russian empire on it. As Fyodor withdraws Boris sings of the unhappiness he foresees and of how the thought of the murdered Dmitri haunts him: 'I stand supreme in power' (Dostig ya vishe vlasti).

A noise is heard outside. A boyar (nobleman) in waiting enters with news of civil disturbance caused by Shuisky. Fyodor re-enters and tells his father how the noise outside was caused by a pet parrot misbehaving.

Shuisky enters, and Boris accuses him of plotting. Shuisky says a Pretender has arisen in Lithuania under the name of Dmitri—a name that shakes Boris, who seeks confirmation from Shuisky that the true Dmitri was in fact killed. Left alone, agitated, Boris imagines that the moving figures on the mechanical clock—which now begins to strike—are a vision of the murdered child.

ACT III

At Sandomir Castle in Poland, Princess Marina is being adorned by her attendants. But she does not care for the idle flattery of their song. She wants to hear of Poland's glory and hopes that Dmitri (with whom she has fallen in love) will make her empress in Moscow. Her confessor, the Jesuit Rangoni, tells her to lead Dmitri on and win his allegiance to the Roman Catholic Church. Marina curses Rangoni's artfulness, but gives way.

In the castle garden by moonlight the lovesick Grigori—or Dmitri, as he now calls himself—is awaiting Marina. Rangoni appears, addressing him as Tsarevich, and asking to be accepted as his spiritual guide. A polonaise is heard. Marina, who is entertaining guests, passes by with an old nobleman; the guests sing of Poland's coming triumph over the Russians.

Marina re-enters. Obedient to Rangoni, she pretends to spurn Dmitri's promises of love and demands assurance of a throne. They quarrel, then are reconciled; Rangoni, aside, is gleeful.

ACT IV

The State Council of Boyars is meeting in the Moscow Kremlin. The secretary of the council, Shchelkalov, announces Boris's wish for support against the Pretender. They give it. Shuisky (whom the others suspect of rebellion) enters and reports that he secretly observed Boris trembling, declaring he saw the ghost of the murdered Dmitri, and calling 'Out, child!' (Chur, ditya!).

Boris himself, ill, lurches in and speaks those very words. He sits down.

Shuisky, having asked permission, withdraws to bring in a monk who has sought audience. It is Pimen, who declares that he had become blind but, on revisiting the grave of the murdered Tsarevich Dmitri, was miraculously cured.

Boris falls. Knowing death is near, he sends for his son and dismisses the boyars. Bells toll. He tells Fyodor to mistrust the boyars and to champion the people and the Russian Church. Distant voices are heard; the boyars re-enter, and Boris dies.

In a forest clearing near Kromy the rebellious crowd are baiting Krushchov, a captured boyar who is a supporter of Boris. A simpleton enters and sings religious words. Urchins mock him and tap the old pan he wears for a hat. Missail and Varlaam (the vagabond monks) enter and lead the crowd in praise of Dmitri; two Jesuits, Lavitzky and Chernikovskiy, also praise Dmitri—in Latin—but the crowd turn against them and take them into the forest to hang them.

Heralded by a trumpet-call, Dmitri enters on horseback. The crowd hail him. Krushchov shakes off his bonds and hails him too. Dmitri urges all: 'To Moscow!' The voices of the Jesuits, in prayer, are heard off-stage. All follow Dmitri off, leaving only the simpleton singing of unhappy Russia.

* * *

Boris Godunov is remarkable for its reproduction of ordinary speech-rhythms—the music thus being asymmetrical, with frequent changes of time-signature. Mussorgsky also uses actual folk-tunes, notably the following, which becomes the crowd's salute to Boris on his coronation:

Moderato
Chorus

Voices 

[Harmony omitted] Like the sun in the skies, su - preme in his glo - ry

(Ex. 1)

When in Act II the monk Pimen is writing his chronicle, a most graphic musical figure 'describes' the slow moving of pen over parchment—first continuously, then intermittently as the work draws to an end and Pimen comments on the approaching dawn. Later, as Pimen tells Grigori the story of the murdered Dmitri, we hear:

[Moderato]
PIMEN *p*

Voice

He'd be your age or al-most and reign to-day!

Orch.

p *mf* *mf* *sf* *p*

(Ex. 2)

The accompaniment figure in the last bar characterizes Dmitri throughout—that is, the real murdered Dmitri and also Grigori, as the Pretender. Other themes recur in the opera, though less prominently. One theme associated with Boris recurs (in the bass of the accompaniment) at the beginning of the Death Scene:

Moderato
BORIS *p* *pp* *3*

Voice

Fare-well, my son, I am dy-ing

Orch.

p

(Ex. 3)

The unemphatic vocal line given to Boris is typical: the role calls not for great vocal range or agility but for the ability to bring out the dramatic intensity behind notes which look, on paper, as ordinary as this.

PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY

(1840-93)

TCHAIKOVSKY wrote ten operas, three of them based on Pushkin's writings. Of these three, two have entered and remained in the world's repertory, and in Russia today are regarded as stable favourites. *Eugene Onegin* (1879) is the more lyrical; Tchaikovsky was utterly absorbed in the purely human passion of his heroine, Tatyana. *The Queen of Spades* (1890) is on a broader canvas, with stormier music as Fate buffets the characters and a ghost (real or imagined?) twists the hero's mind. While Mussorgsky, in his setting of Russian words, aims at a representation of the realism of speech, Tchaikovsky prefers a romantic idiom with formal numbers. In both *Eugene Onegin* and *The Queen of Spades* he included ballroom scenes with brilliant dance music giving scope for the ballet.

EUGENE ONEGIN

*Libretto by the composer and K. S. Shilovsky,
after Pushkin's narrative poem*

First performed: Moscow, 1879

Three Acts

Cast in order of singing:

Tatyana	} daughters of Mme Larina	{ soprano
Olga		{ contralto
Filipevna, their old nurse		mezzo-soprano
Mme Larina, a landowner		mezzo-soprano
Vladimir Lensky, engaged to Olga		tenor
Eugene Onegin, his friend		baritone
Tikhon Petrovich Buyanov, a captain		bass
Triquet, a French tutor		tenor
Zaretsky, a friend of Lensky		bass
Prince Gremin		bass

[The role of Guillot, a coachman, is silent.]

The scene is laid on a Russian
country estate near St. Petersburg in the 1820s

For many, the most remarkable character of the opera is not that of the title-role; it is the heroine, Tatyana, with her romantic longings. Tchaikovsky himself almost fell in love with his creation. The action is placed at a time when the English romantic novel swept the literary taste of Europe. 'Oh, Grandison! . . . Oh, Richardson!' sighs Tatyana's mother, Mme Larina. *Sir Charles Grandison* is the title of a novel (1753) by the English writer Samuel Richardson.

Tatyana (sometimes referred to by the pet forms Tanya and Tanyusha), is also a novel-reader, and her literary, romantic conception of love is contrasted with the matter-of-fact approach of her sister Olga.

'Prince' in imperial Russia indicates the highest rank of aristocracy but *not* royalty. 'Larina' is the feminine form of the surname Larin.

ACT I

Mme Larina, assisted by Filipevna (her children's old nurse), is making jam on a portable stove in her garden. From inside the house a song is heard: Larina's two daughters, Tatyana and Olga, are singing a duet. The voices of Larina (reminiscing about her youth and marriage) and Filipevna are added and continue when the girls' song has ended.

The singing of peasants is heard. They approach and offer Larina a decorated sheaf as a symbol of the collected harvest. They sing and dance for her, then leave. Tatyana and Olga come out. Olga sings of her merry disposition. Larina bids Filipevna provide the peasants with refreshment. Tatyana looks sad—because of the tragic novel she is reading, she explains.

Filipevna announces the arrival of Lensky, Olga's betrothed; Onegin, a new neighbour whom they have not formally met, is with him and is presented. Larina and Filipevna leave the four young people together. Tatyana is romantically impressed by Onegin; Onegin, blasé, is mildly taken with Tatyana.

Lensky approaches Olga with loving words, and they walk away. Onegin asks Tatyana whether country life does not bore her; she replies that she daydreams. They stroll off. Lensky returns with Olga and declares his love for her ('Ya lyublyu vas'). Larina and Filipevna come out of the house again and beckon the others in. Filipevna comments to herself on Tatyana's bashful appearance: has she taken a fancy to this 'new gentleman'?

The scene changes to Tatyana's bedroom. She is in her nightdress, but does not feel sleepy and lets Filipevna tell her of her own strange marriage. Then she bids her go. Left alone, she writes a letter to Onegin, having difficulty in finding the right words. In it she confesses her love for him.

Dawn comes. Filipevna re-enters. Tatyana gives her the letter to send—and Filipevna pretends at first not to know for whom it is intended.

Next day, in a far corner of the Larins' garden, peasant girls sing as they gather berries, then move off. Tatyana enters, agitated, for Onegin is approaching: he speaks courteously but coldly to her of the letter she sent him, making it clear that he does not return her passion. She is mortified and silent. The peasant girls' chorus is heard again.

ACT II

At a ball at the Larins' to celebrate Tatyana's name-day, a waltz is danced amid conversation. Captain Buyanov, acting as host, is surrounded by girls; Onegin dances with Tatyana and overhears ill-natured gossip about himself. Bored, he determines on an idle revenge on Lensky for bringing him here. He takes Olga away from Lensky for a dance—'Allow me!' (Proshu vas!)¹—and flirts with her. The other guests' gay comments are resumed over the waltz. When it is ended, Lensky confronts Olga and Onegin angrily but they go off for another dance.

Triquet, the old French tutor, is brought forward and sings an old-fashioned song of compliments to Tatyana.

A cotillion begins. Onegin and Lensky, not dancing, quarrel: Lensky challenges Onegin to a duel. Larina protests at such an upset in her house. 'Yes, in your house!' (V vashem dome) says Lensky, bitterly recalling his former pleasure there; all the guests join in. Tempers rise; Lensky calls Onegin a seducer and Onegin hurls himself on Lensky. The pair leave separately, Lensky calling 'Goodbye for ever' (Proshchay navek) to Olga.

Early the next morning, by a river-bank, Lensky is waiting with his second, Zaretsky, for Onegin to appear for the duel. Zaretsky withdraws, and Lensky, alone, laments the bygone golden days—'Where have you disappeared?' (Kuda, kuda, kuda . . .)—and laments for Olga, whom he still loves.

Onegin appears, lacking a 'gentleman' as second but bringing his coachman, Guillot, instead. The seconds retire to arrange the formalities. Lensky and Onegin sing (apart and aside from each other) of their new and perhaps ridiculous enmity. On three claps of Zaretsky's hands, both men fire. Lensky falls. 'Dead?' (Ubit?) asks Onegin. Zaretsky confirms it. Onegin is struck with horror.

ACT III

It is some years later. Onegin, after much travelling abroad, is at a ball in St. Petersburg. A polonaise is danced. Onegin, aside, declares himself bored by the occasion; he is still pursued by the memory of Lensky's death.

¹ English version by Edward J. Dent (O.U.P.).

The guests dance an écossaise, then comment as Prince Gremin enters. On his arm (to Onegin's astonishment) is Tatyana, who converses with others but notices Onegin. Gremin tells Onegin that Tatyana is his wife, and speaks of the great comfort she has brought him: 'The power of love is all-compelling' (*Lyubvi vsye vosrasti pokorni*). He presents Onegin to her; they acknowledge each other only as former neighbours in the country, but as Tatyana and her husband leave, Onegin feels powerfully drawn towards her.

Later, at her house, Tatyana is alone, holding a letter from Onegin. To herself she admits that her passion for him has reawakened. Onegin enters and kneels to her. She bids him rise, asking why he pursues her now. Although she attempts to be cold, Onegin seizes her hand and declares himself passionately; momentarily overcome, she allows herself to utter the words 'I love you' (*Ya vas lyublyu*).

But she will not leave her husband: bidding Onegin go, she leaves the room. Onegin, overcome with despair, quickly departs.

* * *

As Tatyana in the first scene tells how sympathetically she reacts to the lovers' tragedy in the novel she is reading, we hear in voice and orchestra a theme which has been foreshadowed in the overture:

Andante
TATYANA

Voice

[*mf*] Oh, mo - ther, if you'd on - ly read the sto - ry—

Orch.

p *p cresc. poco a poco*

it's all a - bout a pair of lov - ers.

(Ex. 1)

In the following scene, when she is in her room, the theme is heard again from the orchestra; then, when left alone, Tatyana bursts out with a second theme—her purposeful as opposed to her dreamy side—as she prepares to write to Onegin:

Allegro moderato
TATYANA

Voice *f* I care not what may be the end - ing, Nor what di -

Orch. (upper parts omitted) *mf*

- sas - ter fate be send - ing

(Ex. 2)

Later in this Letter Scene, Tatyana asks, as she writes: 'Are you [Onegin] my guardian angel or a wily tempter?'—to a third theme, heard a moment earlier in the orchestra:

Andante ♩ = 69

Orch. *p molto espress.*

(Ex. 3)

Here are three of Tchaikovsky's most memorable themes, all musically interrelated and all devoted to portraying his beloved Tatyana. The music for Lensky, the last-act aria for Gremin, the popular dance music and the peasant choruses are almost equally memorable. The duet for Lensky and Onegin before their duel is a canon, an apt musical illustration of two men, separated, not speaking to one another, yet thinking along the same lines.

NIKOLAI RIMSKY-KORSAKOV

(1844-1908)

ALTHOUGH at first a naval officer, Rimsky-Korsakov developed a very full musical career—as conductor, teacher (his pupils included Stravinsky), promoter and editor of others' works, and a prolific composer. His fifteen operas are nearly all based on historical or legendary Russian material. As Tchaikovsky excelled in the operatic portrayal of emotions from within, so Rimsky-Korsakov excelled in the depiction of scenes from without—transforming, as it were, visions and colours into music, and making considerable play with eastern and other exotic elements.

His most important operas are *May Night* (1880), *The Snow Maiden* (1882), *Sadko* (1898), from which comes the so-called Hindu Song, really 'The Song of the Indian Merchant', *The Tale of Tsar Saltan* (1902), from which comes 'The Flight of the Bumble-bee', *The Legend of the Invisible City of Kitezh* (1907) and *The Golden Cockerel* (1909).

THE GOLDEN COCKEREL

(Zolotoy Petushok)

Libretto by V. Belsky after a story by Pushkin

First performed: Moscow, 1909

Three Acts

Cast in order of singing:

The Astrologer	<i>tenor-altino</i>
King Dodon	<i>bass</i>
Prince Guidon, his elder son	<i>tenor</i>
General Polkan, in service to the king	<i>bass</i>
Prince Afron, the king's younger son	<i>baritone</i>
The Golden Cockerel	<i>soprano</i>
Amelfa, housekeeper to the king	<i>contralto</i>
The Queen of Shemakhan	<i>soprano</i>

Chorus of soldiers, courtiers, people, etc.

The place and time of the action are left unstated

A fable, a fairy-tale, a thing of fantastic and sometimes garish music: superficially, *The Golden Cockerel* might seem to be no more than that. But the fantastic plumage conceals the barbs of satire. Indeed, the Tsarist censor at first forbade the production of *The Golden Cockerel*: its mocking exposure of stupid despotism perhaps struck too near home. It was not produced until the year after the composer's death.

The requirements for the cast include a 'tenor-altino', a type of voice which Rimsky-Korsakov said 'is rarely found' and which is not listed under that name in the chief British or Italian musical dictionaries. The current Soviet *Encyclopedic Musical Dictionary* (1959), however, appears to define it simply as a very high tenor. Rimsky-Korsakov's part rises to an E above the usual tenor 'top C'; but his score also includes an alternative without quite such high notes in case the part needs to be given to 'a lyric tenor with a good, strong falsetto' as the next best thing.

ACT I

In a brief prologue in front of the curtain, the Astrologer tells the audience it is about to see a moral tale.

The curtain rises to show the ageing King Dodon with his Council of State. He asks for advice on how to deal with the foreign attack which threatens from all sides. His elder son Guidon produces a brilliant idea: let the enemy invade the surrounding country while the king and his army remain secure in the central citadel and devise some way of repelling them. The king and his courtiers applaud, and the king is angry with General Polkan when he declares the plan inadequate.

The king's younger son, Afron, has an even better idea: disband the army, then suddenly mobilize it again for a surprise attack! Once again king and courtiers applaud—and once again General Polkan doubts the plan and is abused and even physically attacked. Well, what is to be done? Consult an augury, perhaps—but then the courtiers begin to quarrel on rival methods of foretelling the future. At the height of the quarrel a mysterious Astrologer enters. To solve the difficulty, he offers a golden cockerel who will crow to indicate an alarm and point to the direction from which it comes.

The bird now crows ('Kiriki, kirikuku' in Russian) and adds that the king may for the present sleep soundly. King and courtiers hail the prodigy and the king offers to do the Astrologer any service he wishes. The Astrologer says he may take advantage of this later, but not yet, and withdraws. The king dismisses his Council, gets into a big bed, accepts delicacies from his housekeeper Amelfa, plays with a parrot, then (lulled by the golden cockerel's repeated cry that all is safe) goes to sleep, dreaming of an unknown beautiful woman.

Suddenly the cock crows to raise the alarm, which is taken up all round.

Polkan rushes in; then Dodon's sons, armed, go off none too willingly to fight. A military march is heard from outside; but the atmosphere becomes calm again and the cock crows that the danger is averted.

Dodon tries to sleep again and, having remembered that he had a most pleasant dream but having forgotten what it was, asks Amelfa to make conjectures. At the third time she guesses rightly, and Dodon falls asleep again. Once more the cockerel sounds the alarm; Polkan dares to arouse the sleeping king; with difficulty he puts on his rusty armour and goes to mount a horse (making sure it is a docile one). Then, to the acclamation of his subjects, he rides away to fight.

ACT II

It is night. The battle has gone badly. The corpses of the king's two sons are seen; riderless horses stand near. Some surviving soldiers lament their state. King Dodon joins them, bewailing his sons and his army. General Polkan enters and tries to raise the soldiers' spirits; but they cannot attack the enemy because they do not even know where he is.

Suddenly the morning mists begin to disperse and a mysterious, luxurious tent is seen. In a ridiculous manner the soldiers fire a cannon at it. But it is unharmed, and the soldiers flee when it opens to reveal a beautiful woman. Accompanied by four slaves each bearing a musical instrument, she sings a hymn to the sun.

To Dodon's inquiries she reveals that she is the Queen of Shemakhan. She makes the men comfortable (the corpses are tidily taken away) but they are still uneasy in their minds. Polkan tries valiantly to make sociable conversation but the queen, carried away by the memory of a dream of love which she had the previous night, finds him gross and gets Dodon to send him away. She comes close to the embarrassed Dodon and sets out to conquer him with sensuous melody and sensuous description.

She makes Dodon sing in turn, which he does to a brief, ridiculous tune. Then she tearfully confesses her wish to find a man to dominate her. Dodon volunteers for the role and tells her 'Stop your weeping!' (*Perestan plakat*). She now insists that he show his manliness by dancing. Extremely reluctant (in fact, consenting only when she threatens to take Polkan in his place), he dances while she instructs him, herself dancing with a tambourine in her hand. The dance music becomes more furious, and she laughs at Dodon, who falls down exhausted.

As soon as he recovers he offers her his heart and his kingdom, magnanimously offering also to have Polkan (whom the queen dislikes) beheaded. Dodon's chariot is brought in and the pair ride away—Dodon ecstatic, the queen's female slaves reflecting their mistress's attitude as they sing of this latest, ridiculous conquest of hers. Dodon's soldiers may be poor fighters, but now they sing 'Hurrah!' very well.

ACT III

Back in Dodon's city, with the golden cockerel still keeping watch, there is a general sense of foreboding, but Amelfa assures the people that Dodon is returning in triumph with a girl he has rescued. Trumpets sound his approach. First there enters the queen's procession, with giants, dwarfs and other grotesque participants. Then a chariot brings Dodon and the queen herself, to whom the crowd shouts 'Long life!' (*Dolgo zhit tebya!*).

Suddenly the Astrologer appears. The queen, seemingly disturbed, asks who he is. Dodon greets him warmly. The Astrologer reminds him of his promise of a gift and now asks, as this gift, the queen. Dodon remonstrates but the Astrologer persists, saying he wants to get married and refusing alternative gifts. Growing furious, Dodon hits him on the head with his sceptre and the Astrologer falls dead.

Dodon is troubled. The queen seems to make light of the affair, but when the reassured Dodon turns to embrace her she repulses him, telling him to vanish (*'Propadi ti'*) and his stupid nation as well! Dodon starts to remonstrate gently, but the golden cockerel crows suddenly and attacks the king on his head with its beak. He too falls dead, amid a peal of thunder. Darkness descends. The laughter of the queen is heard. When the darkness lifts, both queen and cockerel have disappeared; the people intone a long lament and throw themselves despairingly on the ground.

The story is over. The curtain falls. But in front of it comes the Astrologer: only he and the queen were real people, he says, and the rest were creatures of the imagination.

* * *

As in others of his operas, Rimsky-Korsakov here borrows from Wagner the use of vividly descriptive leading-motives, but rejects Wagner's symphonic, ever-developing texture in favour of a more regular and symmetrical musical line.

The very opening of the orchestral introduction gives us two of the most important motives, instantly recognizable when they return in the opera itself. First we have the cockerel, on a muted trumpet, followed by the Queen of Shemakhan in a sensuous melody on the cellos:



(Ex. 1)

IX

GIACOMO PUCCINI

(1858-1924)

WE now resume the story of Italian opera. Verdi, in his middle years, reigned without substantial challenge. Of operas by other Italian composers of the period, almost the only survivor in the repertory of non-Italian countries is *La Gioconda* (1876) by Amilcare Ponchielli (1834-86), the teacher of both Puccini and Mascagni.

'Puccini looks to me more like the heir of Verdi than any of his rivals.' That was the verdict of a young London music critic called Bernard Shaw in 1894—a verdict made, remarkably, on the evidence only of Puccini's first successful opera, *Manon Lescaut* (1893). Shaw pointed to Puccini's combination of a symphonic style (that is, a style of continuously developing music, like Wagner's) with a vein of traditional Italian melody.

Puccini thereafter turned out a chain of operatic successes unequalled since his day. He pursued and extended this symphonic method; he extended also his range of poignant and biting harmonies, learning from Debussy as well as Wagner. Dramatically he cared little for subtlety of character but much for the power of erotic or brutal impulses seen or suggested on the stage—impulses which are powerfully suggested in the high points of his music. Puccini's characteristic *genre* is thus what in English is called *melodrama* (it is amusing to recall that this word descends from the Italian *melodramma*, which simply means opera!). The comedy of *Gianni Schicchi* stands as an exception.

LA BOHÈME

(Bohemian Life)

*Libretto by Giuseppe Giacosa and Luigi Illica, after
the novel by Henry Mürger*

First performed: Turin, 1896

Four Acts

Cast in order of singing :

Marcello, a painter	<i>baritone</i>
Rodolfo, a poet	<i>tenor</i>
Colline, a philosopher	<i>bass</i>
Schaunard, a musician	<i>baritone</i>
Benoit, their landlord	<i>bass</i>
Mimi	<i>soprano</i>
Parpignol, a toy seller	<i>tenor</i>
Musetta	<i>soprano</i>
Alcindoro, a counsellor of state	<i>bass</i>
A customs official	<i>bass</i>
Sergeant	<i>bass</i>

Chorus of people, students, work-girls, shopkeepers,
street-vendors, soldiers, waiters, children, etc.

The scene is laid in Paris, about 1830

La Bohème, the tunes and the pathos of which have made it one of the most successful operas ever written, was Puccini's fourth opera. Preceding it were the unsuccessful *Le Villi* (The Wilis) and *Edgar*, produced in 1884 and 1889 respectively, and the successful *Manon Lescaut* (1893).

Mimi, the heroine of *La Bohème*, dies of consumption (i.e. in modern language, pulmonary tuberculosis) like the heroine of *La Traviata*. But whereas *La Traviata* is concerned with the social taboos of love and marriage, *La Bohème* does not speak of marriage at all. The girls have Bohemian lovers and live with them in near-poverty or leave them for others who can provide more luxurious living—a point less clear in the opera than in its literary inspiration, Henry Münger's prose work *Scènes de la Bohème* (1854). (A play on the subject was called *Scènes de la vie de Bohème*.) The period of Münger's writings is retained in the opera, the libretto of which mentions Guizot, the French Prime Minister during the reign of Louis Philippe (1830–48). 'La Bohème' is defined in a French dictionary as: 'Bohemia; wild and disorderly people (*or* life), the loafing fraternity; vagrants, tramps.'

Following Italian custom, Puccini's librettists Italianized the original names 'Rodolphe' and 'Marcel' into Rodolfo and Marcello. The name 'Musetta' (meaning a bagpipe and indicating the girl's stridency and roughness, in contrast to the mildness and sweetness of Mimi) is an invention of the librettists, the character not having an exact counterpart in the French original.

ACT I

Marcello and Rodolfo, in the Parisian garret which they share with Colline and Schaunard, are doing their best to keep warm on a freezing

Christmas Eve. With no fuel for their stove, they think of burning a chair, then Marcello's latest painting, but finally settle for the manuscript of the play Rodolfo has been writing. Act I is blazing when Colline enters. As the closing scene is reduced to ashes, Schaunard arrives, with attendants carrying food, wine and fuel, to the others' astonished delight, and flings some money on the floor. While he tells how he earned it—from an Englishman who wanted music lessons—they set the table; but Schaunard insists that they dine out.

As they are having a drink before leaving, the landlord, Benoit, comes in, asking for his rent: they offer him wine, then tease him about a woman they have seen him with, and finally hustle him out in mock disgust at such behaviour in a married man. Then, when the others go off to the Café Momus, Rodolfo says that he will follow in five minutes—he has an article to finish.

He is making little progress. Suddenly there is a knock on the door. Mimi, a frail young girl who lives in a room above, is on the threshold, half-fainting; her candle has blown out and she wants it lighted. Rodolfo helps her to a chair and gives her wine. She soon feels better and starts to go; but she loses her key and her candle again goes out. His conveniently goes out too and they are soon both in the dark, groping for the key, which Rodolfo finds and hides. Their hands meet; Rodolfo takes hers in his. 'Your tiny hand is frozen' (*Che gelida manina*),¹ he exclaims, and while warming it into life he introduces himself. Will she now tell him about herself, he asks? 'Yes. I'm always called Mimi' (*Si. Mi chiamano Mimi*), she begins; she tells him that she works in solitude, embroidering artificial flowers, but it is nature's flowers that delight her.

His friends call from the street below; he asks them to keep a place at the café. In the duet 'Lovely maid in the moonlight' (*O soave fanciulla*) Rodolfo and Mimi find themselves falling in love. He agrees to take her with him to the café (with a hint, too, of what he expects when they return), and their voices are heard as they go together down the staircase.

ACT II

In the square outside the Café Momus, in the Latin Quarter, there is a large crowd, with street-vendors crying their wares, students, a mother calling her children; their noises mingle with those from the café, where customers, some of them at tables outside, are calling to the waiters. Rodolfo and Mimi have arrived to join their friends. Schaunard is buying a horn, Marcello flirting with passing girls, Colline buying books and having some clothes repaired. They sit down for their meal at a table outside the café, and Rodolfo introduces Mimi to his friends. Meanwhile, there is a further commotion in the street, as the toy-seller Parpignol

¹ English version by William Grist and Percy Pinkerton (*Ricordi*).

comes along, followed by children (calling Parpignol's name delightedly) and their mothers. The friends order their meal and talk gaily.

The vivacious Musetta, obviously known to the passers-by, enters. Formerly Marcello was her lover, but now she comes with an elderly admirer, Alcindoro, whom she treats like a tame dog. She spots the 'Bohemians', insists on taking the table next to them, and, to Alcindoro's embarrassment, she tries harder and harder to attract Marcello's attention, singing her Waltz Song: 'As through the street' (*Quando me'n vo*'). Marcello becomes more and more inflamed.

Eventually Musetta sends Alcindoro off on an errand, pretending one of her shoes is hurting, and she and Marcello embrace passionately. The waiter brings the bill, which the friends cannot pay. Now soldiers, with a band, approach: windows are flung open, and children pursued by their mothers come out into the street. In the general excitement the friends rush off, Marcello and Colline carrying the half-shod Musetta, leaving Alcindoro to pay both bills on his return. They sing Musetta's praises as the crowd sings those of the drum-major.

ACT III

Two months have elapsed. It is early morning at the *Barrière d'Enfer*, one of the gates of Paris, with street-sweepers, a customs official (who opens the gate) and milkmaids and carters passing. Singing is heard from a nearby inn, with Musetta's voice prominent. Day is just dawning when Mimi arrives and asks a sergeant to point out the inn where a painter is working. He does so, and she asks there for Marcello. Soon he comes out, and tells her that he and Musetta have been living there for a month, he as a jobbing painter and she teaching singing. She asks if Rodolfo is there: on learning that he is, she refuses to enter and bursts into tears. They still love one another, she tells Marcello, but Rodolfo is fiercely jealous. He advises them to part, and she agrees that they must. Her persistent cough alarms him.

Rodolfo, who has been asleep, now comes out. As he talks to Marcello, Mimi conceals herself. At first he says that he wants to leave Mimi as she is such a coquette, but eventually he gives the true reason—her failing health, which is further aggravated by their life together in his chilly room. Mimi can control her tears no longer, and Rodolfo hears her. They embrace, then bid each other a sad farewell in the duet 'To the home that she left' (*Donde lieta uscì*)—while in the background Musetta and Marcello have a lively quarrel.

ACT IV

Marcello and Rodolfo have each left their girls and are back sharing the garret. They are pretending to work. Each lately happens to have seen

the other's girl; on hearing the news each pretends no longer to care. But memories of former happiness overwhelm them. Schaunard and Colline arrive, carrying food (four loaves and a herring) of which they make a mock-sumptuous meal. They then hold a mock dance, Rodolfo taking Marcello for his partner. Then Colline and Schaunard fight a duel, with tongs and shovel.

Suddenly Musetta enters, in great agitation. She has found Mimi, utterly exhausted. They bring her in and prepare a bed for her; soon she feels rather better, but there is no food or drink in the house and it is clear that she is dying. Musetta takes off her earrings, to be sold to provide food and medical attention, and she promises a muff, to warm Mimi's icy hands. She and Marcello leave. Colline sings a farewell to his old coat ('Vecchia zimarra'), intending to sell it to buy necessities for Mimi. He leaves with Schaunard.

The lovers, left alone, sing of their happy memories of their first meeting: 'Back to her nest comes the swallow in the springtide' (Torna al nido la rondine). Mimi has a convulsive fit of coughing just as Schaunard, then Musetta and Marcello, return. Mimi delightedly takes the muff, sinking back a moment later into unconsciousness. Musetta mutters a prayer.

As Colline returns with money for the doctor, who is already on his way, Schaunard murmurs to Marcello that Mimi is dead. Rodolfo thinks she is resting peacefully: then he sees their expressions and the truth dawns. He flings himself on the bed, sobbing over her lifeless body.

* * *

'Your tiny hand is frozen' (Che gelida manina), which is one of the world's most famous operatic songs, starts with one note seven times repeated—than which, in itself, nothing could be less 'inspired'. Plainly it is not entirely in 'melody' in its purest sense that Puccini's power lies. In fact, the success of *La Bohème* partly depends on a very strong, very distinctive harmonic style and on a structural development which interweaves various strands symphonically, sometimes with Wagner-like concentration. This harmonic and this structural trait combine in their effect: a theme that

rall. Andantino affettuoso
(as she faintly repeats Rodolfo's words)

Allegretto un poco sostenuto MIMI *dolciss.*

Voice

[un-no-] ticed [pp] "Your ti - ny hand is fro - zen! Let me
[vede-] va Che ge - li - da ma - mi - na Se la

Orch. *pp* *ppp*

warm it in - to life!" It was dark and my
 la - sci ri - scal - dar! E - ra bu - io, e la

ppp *pp*

Allegro moderato

MIMI *rall.*..... (a sudden spasm half suffocates her; she sinks back fainting)

hand then you clasp - ed.
 man tu mi pren - de - vi

rall. *fp*

RODOLFO (raising her up in alarm) 26 *a tempo*
 quasi a piacere

Oh! God! Mi - mi!
 Oh! Dio! Mi - mi!

a tempo
cresc. *f* *col canto* *f*

(opens her eyes and smilingly reassures Rodolfo and Schaunard)

MIMI *rall. molto*
 quasi a piacere *Andante con moto*

(at this moment, Schaunard returns and hearing Rodolfo's exclamation, hastens to the bedside)

RODOLFO Noth - ing, I'm bet - ter.
 Nu - la... Sto be - ne.

What now?
 Che avvien?

f *ff* *Andante con moto*
espressivo *pp*

recurs is recognized by its well-defined harmonic background (and sometimes by characteristic orchestration) as well as by its 'tune'. Such recognition is, for most people, subconscious, but it is worth examining it in eighteen bars from the final pages of the vocal score. The failing Mimi is recalling her first meeting with Rodolfo (Ex. 1).

Note:

bar

- 1 single note which originally preceded Rodolfo's 'Your tiny hand is frozen'
- 2 Mimi begins to quote the same
- 7 Mimi ceases to quote and returns to her present conversation, but the orchestra goes on quoting
- 12 sudden change to the theme associated with Mimi's coughing and illness in Acts I and III
- 16 the return of Schaunard is signified by his own cheery theme, and
- 17 as Mimi tries to reassure Rodolfo and Schaunard that she has regained her old self, her old theme—'I'm always called Mimi' (Mi chiamano Mimi)—returns in the orchestra. Significantly this theme has (and originally had) a one-note orchestral introduction, one of the signs of its kinship to 'Your tiny hand is frozen'.

TOSCA

*Libretto by Giuseppe Giacosa and Luigi Illica, after
the play by Victorien Sardou*

First performed: Rome, 1900

Three Acts

Cast in order of singing:

Cesare Angelotti, leader of the proscribed Republican party	bass
A sacristan	baritone
Mario Cavaradossi, a painter	tenor
Floria Tosca, a famous singer	soprano
Baron Scarpia, chief of police	baritone
Spoletta, police agent	tenor
Sciarrone, a police officer	baritone
A jailer	bass
A shepherd boy	boy's voice (or contralto)

Chorus of choirboys, soldiers, police agents, ladies,
nobles, citizens, artisans, etc.

The scene is laid in Rome, in June 1800

Political struggle and sexual struggle: it is a proven good mixture for the stage, and the French playwright Victorien Sardou (1831-1908) used it with great success in *La Tosca* (1887). Moreover he was writing of a time and place (Rome, 1800) when religious and political attitudes were strongly intertwined—which allowed him to add religious conflict to his ingredients. Puccini's opera, based on the play, makes the political and religious struggle less clear: not until the moment when Cavaradossi, about to face the firing-squad, refuses the services of a priest do we gather the force of his conviction as a free-thinker, and we miss the point of Cavaradossi's doing a painting in a church (in the play, an intended ruse to conceal his true political convictions).

But the sexual battle—Scarpia torturing Cavaradossi in earshot of Tosca so that she, who loves Cavaradossi, should be willing to give herself to Scarpia to earn mercy for her lover—is presented in Puccini's opera with great dramatic violence and the maximum force of his musical language. These three characters, each with their dramatic solos, are memorably brought to theatrical life.

ACT I

In the church of Sant' Andrea della Valle, a painter's gear and a large, covered picture are to be seen. Angelotti, an escaped political prisoner, runs in, dishevelled and exhausted. He glances round and, seeing an image of the Madonna, he looks under it and eventually finds a key (left there for him by his sister, the Marchesa Attavanti); with it he opens the door to the Attavanti family chapel and goes within, closing the door behind him.

A sacristan enters with some paint-brushes for Cavaradossi, the painter who has been at work. But Cavaradossi is not there to take them. The Angelus is rung, and the sacristan kneels in prayer. Cavaradossi enters, uncovers his unfinished picture of the Magdalen and contemplates it; the sacristan is somewhat horrified by its resemblance to a lady whom he has seen at worship in the church (in fact Angelotti's sister). Cavaradossi says that it is modelled on her. He starts painting, stopping to contrast with the portrait a miniature of Tosca: 'Strange harmony of contrasts' (*Reconcordia armonia*).¹

The sacristan soon departs and Angelotti, believing the church empty, comes out of the chapel. He sees Cavaradossi and immediately recognizes him as a supporter of his own Republican party. Tosca's voice is heard outside, and Cavaradossi hurries Angelotti back into the chapel with the basket of food prepared for himself. He lets Tosca in. She momentarily suspects that he was not alone—perhaps with another woman—but is quickly reassured. She adorns the Madonna's image with flowers, then

¹ English version by W. Beatty-Kingston (Ricordi).

turns to him, suggesting an assignation for the evening. The two sing tenderly of their love. As she is about to leave she sees his portrait of the Magdalen, recognizes its model, and is furiously jealous. He once more assures her that there is no cause for jealousy, and they again sing of their love.

After bidding Tosca an affectionate farewell, Cavaradossi lets Angelotti out of the chapel. He determines to hide Angelotti in his villa to help him escape from Scarpia, the evil chief of the Roman police. As Angelotti prepares to leave the church a cannon sounds—the sign that a prisoner's escape has been discovered—and the two hurry off.

The sacristan and a crowd of boys enter the church, excited at the news of Napoleon's defeat, which is to be celebrated by a cantata at the Palace with Tosca as soloist.

Suddenly they are interrupted (and terrified) by the arrival of the sinister Scarpia and his men. Scarpia tells his assistant, Spoletta, to search the building, while he himself questions the sacristan. They discover the Attavanti chapel unlocked; in it is a fan, bearing the Attavanti arms, and the empty food basket. Then Scarpia recognizes the Marchesa Attavanti in Cavaradossi's picture.

Tosca returns, disturbed to learn from the sacristan that Cavaradossi has left. Scarpia speaks to her, showing her the Marchesa's fan; he insinuatingly suggests to her that Cavaradossi has gone to meet the Marchesa. Her jealousy is easily aroused, and she goes off angrily to his villa, followed, on Scarpia's instructions, by Spoletta.

The church is filling with people, and against the sound of the organ and chanted prayer, with jubilant bells and cannon shots in the background, Scarpia sings of his two objectives—the death of Angelotti and the possession of Tosca.

ACT II

'A good decoy is Tosca' (*Tosca è buon falco*), muses Scarpia, alone in his room in the Farnese Palace, at supper. He summons Sciarrone, his henchman, and hands him a note for Tosca. He sings of his plan to make Tosca his mistress (actually, as he says, preferring force to more gentle methods) and to hang both Angelotti and Cavaradossi.

Spoletta returns and tells how he and his assistants followed Tosca to Cavaradossi's villa. They have brought back Cavaradossi, but (to Scarpia's annoyance) they could not find Angelotti despite an extensive search. At this moment the cantata is heard from the royal apartments below. Cavaradossi is brought in, protesting. Scarpia starts questioning him about Angelotti (they pause for an instant as Tosca's voice is heard floating above the others) but he gives no information and, to Spoletta's and Scarpia's irritation, only laughs when they mention the searchers' vain

efforts. Scarpia closes the windows so that the music cannot be heard, and resumes the questioning more forcefully, but still to no result. Tosca enters and embraces Cavaradossi, who whispers to her to keep silent. Scarpia sends him into the torture chamber, with a judge to take his deposition.

Left alone with Tosca, Scarpia tries unsuccessfully to obtain information from her about who was at the villa. He asks Sciarrone if Cavaradossi has yet given way, but he has not. Then he horrifies Tosca by revealing that Cavaradossi is at that moment being tortured. She hears his groans and calls to him; Scarpia charges her to keep silent, pressing her to give way by threatening more excruciating agonies. The door is opened and now she can hear all her lover's groans. As Spoletta kneels in prayer, Cavaradossi cries out in intolerable pain and Tosca can stand no more: she tells Scarpia that Angelotti is hidden in the well in the garden of the villa. Terribly mauled, Cavaradossi is brought in. Tosca tries to comfort him, but when he realizes from a remark of Scarpia's that she has betrayed Angelotti he angrily repulses her. Then Sciarrone arrives to tell Scarpia that Napoleon has defeated the royal troops, to Cavaradossi's great delight: 'Victory!' (*Vittoria!*) he sings. Scarpia, infuriated, sends him away under guard.

Tosca begs Scarpia to spare him. He says he might, and offers her wine. Pushing it contemptuously aside, she asks him realistically for his price: 'How much?' (*Quanto?*). His price is her body. She proudly refuses. Distant drums are heard as men march to the scaffold; she can choose whether or not Cavaradossi will be among them, he tells her. In her song 'Love and music' (*Vissi d'arte*) she indicates her helplessness and prays to heaven. Scarpia remains adamant.

Spoletta comes in to say that Angelotti took poison as he was captured. He asks for instructions for dealing with Cavaradossi; Scarpia looks at Tosca, who has no choice but to consent. In Tosca's hearing he orders only a mock execution for Cavaradossi, but secretly he conveys to Spoletta his real meaning—that Cavaradossi is, in fact, to be shot. Keeping up the deception, he writes and hands to Tosca a safe-conduct so that she and Cavaradossi can afterwards leave the country. Then he turns to her, 'Tosca, at last thou art mine' (*Tosca, finalmente mia*). But she has picked up a knife, and plunges it into his heart. Dying, he calls for help, unavailingly. 'And before *him* all Rome trembled!' (*E avanti a lui tremava tutta Roma!*) remarks Tosca. She places a crucifix and candles by the body, and leaves with the safe-conduct.

ACT III

From a platform on the roof of Fort St. Angelo, where Cavaradossi is due for execution, a shepherd boy's voice is heard in the distance as the new

day dawns. Matin bells sound. A group of soldiers arrives with Cavaradossi and a jailer tells him he has one hour to live. The jailer allows him to write his last letter to Tosca; as he does so he remembers the past: 'When the stars were brightly shining' (E lucevan le stelle).

Tosca arrives with the safe-conduct and shows it to Cavaradossi, who is sobbing with emotion. She tells him what took place and warns him that, to keep up the appearances of the mock-execution, he must fall down at the shot and not stand up too soon, 'just like Tosca on the stage' (come la Tosca in teatro). The firing-squad arrives and takes up its position.

She watches tensely. The shots ring out. He falls realistically and does not move. As the soldiers depart, she discovers in horror that the execution was a real one. There is tumult below. Spoletta and Sciarrone arrive, having found out that Tosca has killed Scarpia. Tosca pushes Spoletta away as he comes to arrest her. She springs up on the parapet and flings herself to her death.

* * *

The opera is called *Tosca*, but it starts by proclaiming 'Scarpia!'—in three menacing chords:



(EX. I)

The curtain at once rises on the entry of the escaped Angelotti. The same motive of three chords signals the arrival of Scarpia at his first entrance (interrupting the jubilation of the choristers); it occurs in his big soliloquy in Act II; altered into a less positive succession of chords (ending with the minor instead of the major) it accompanies his dying words after Tosca has stabbed him; and it returns in its original form, but subdued in power, when (in Act III) Tosca tells Cavaradossi what has happened. There are other recurrences too. Such recurrences and metamorphoses of motives is an essential part of Puccini's operatic construction: some sixty such motives have been detected in *Tosca*.

Cavaradossi has the first big lyric outpouring of the opera—the celebrated 'Strange harmony of contrasts' (Recondita armonia)—which Puccini, in the interests of dramatic continuity, 'accompanies' by the mutterings of the sacristan against unbelievers like Cavaradossi himself.

(Concert performances of the solo, and recorded versions, of course miss this.) His aria near the end of the opera constitutes Cavaradossi's second great moment of self-revelation. His voice steals in on one repeated note as though he is quietly thinking alone. But the orchestra has already begun to play as a background the tune which will come from Cavaradossi's voice a few moments later ('When the stars were brightly shining'):

Andante lento appassionato molto

CAVARADOSSI (thinking aloud) Orch.

E lu - ce - van le stel - le rit. rubando rit. a tempo

(Ex. 2)

By the nature of opera we should expect Tosca to have a climactic, sustained outburst at the point where her psychological tensions are highest—when Scarpia is bartering with her for Cavaradossi's freedom—and instead she sings: 'Love and music, these I have lived for' (*Vissi d'arte*). It is not an utterance of protest or resolution but of helplessness:

Andante lento appassionato $\text{♩} = 40$
dolcissimo con grande sentimento

TOSCA *p*

Vis - si d'ar - te vis - si d'a - mo - re,

con molta dolcezza

Orch. *pp* *ppp*

non fe - ci mai male ad a - ni - ma vi - va!

(Ex. 3)

Indeed, it has been well said that Tosca is not really a tigress, even if some prima donnas like to play her so, but a 'little woman' like Mimi and Butterfly, forced to one deed of violence—like Butterfly, again.

MADAMA BUTTERFLY

*Libretto by Giuseppe Giacosa and Luigi Illica, after the play
by David Belasco, itself based on a story by John L. Long*

First performed: Milan, 1904

Two Acts

Cast in order of singing:

Lieut. B. F. Pinkerton, U.S. Navy	<i>tenor</i>
Goro, a marriage-broker	<i>tenor</i>
Suzuki, Madama Butterfly's servant	<i>mezzo-soprano</i>
Sharpless, American Consul	<i>baritone</i>
Madama Butterfly (Cho-cho-san)	<i>soprano</i>
The Imperial Commissioner	<i>bass</i>
The Official Registrar	<i>baritone</i>
The Bonze (priest), Butterfly's uncle	<i>bass</i>
Prince Yamadori	<i>tenor</i>
Mrs. Kate Pinkerton	<i>mezzo-soprano</i>
[The part of Trouble, Butterfly's infant son, is silent.]	

Chorus of Butterfly's friends and relations, servants, sailors

The scene is laid in Nagasaki at the beginning of the
twentieth century

In the summer of 1900 Puccini was in London and saw a performance of a new, successful American one-act play—*Madame Butterfly*, by David Belasco, adapted from a short story by John Luther Long—and he immediately conceived the idea of basing an opera on it. The hero-villain of the play, a U.S. Navy lieutenant who deserts his trusting Japanese wife, was surnamed Pinkerton. In the original story his initials were B.F. (for Benjamin Franklin), but for English audiences he had become F.B., and in the libretto of the opera his full name is mentioned as Sir (!) Francis Blummy Pinkerton. This, however, was in the first version of the opera (in two acts with one interval) which was for various reasons a complete failure when given in February 1904, and had only a single performance. The successful revised version (Brescia, May 1904), in which the second act is itself divided into two parts, drops the incredible Sir Francis Blummy and restores the B.F.

Butterfly herself (on whom, almost entirely, the opera rests) is a most appealing figure, particularly because she is absolutely alone in her plight—her husband has deserted her, her relatives have renounced her, the sympathetic Consul gives her advice she cannot take, and her servant Suzuki cannot grasp her noble single-mindedness. The poignancy of her situation is added to—with a sentimentality which would occasion giggles

in the theatre today if the music were not there to support it—by the appearance of her infant son, Trouble, to whom she gives a Stars and Stripes as a plaything before she bandages his eyes and stabs herself. This Trouble *is* a trouble, by the way: the child is supposed to be between two and three, a very difficult age to represent on the stage either by a dummy or otherwise. Butterfly has proudly given her son not a Japanese but an American name (*Dolore* in the Italian text). Butterfly's own Japanese name is represented in English as Cho-cho-san, in Italian as Cio-cio-san.

ACT I

The obsequious marriage-broker, Goro, is showing Pinkerton round the house he is buying as his matrimonial home in Japan. He is introduced to the three Japanese servants hired for him by Goro, including Suzuki, who compliments him. They depart and Goro watches for the arrival of Butterfly, Pinkerton's bride, her family and the others who will be at the wedding.

First to come is Sharpless, the American Consul. While Goro fetches refreshments, Sharpless admires the house and garden and the fine view of the harbour and ocean. Pinkerton expresses his easygoing attitude to life and to his forthcoming marriage, ending with 'America for ever!' (English words in the Italian original) while the orchestra blares out a phrase from 'The Star-spangled Banner'. He sends Goro to fetch Butterfly and praises her charms, but makes Sharpless uneasy about his irresponsibility, especially when he drinks to a future 'real wife, from America' (*una vera sposa americana*).¹

Butterfly and her friends are heard approaching. When Goro brings them in, she sings of coming to Pinkerton at the call of love, and on her instruction they all kneel ceremoniously before 'B. F. Pinkerton', as she names him. In conversation with Sharpless, she mentions that she comes of good family, is fifteen years old and has a mother but her father is dead. Now Goro announces the arrival of Butterfly's relations, including her mother, a cousin, an uncle (Yakuside) and an aunt. There is a great deal of chatter from the assembled friends, most of it inconsequential and slightly malicious, while servants provide food and drink. Sharpless warns Pinkerton not to trifle with Butterfly.

Soon Butterfly bids them all bow low before the two Americans. Rather embarrassed, Butterfly asks if he minds her bringing a few personal possessions, which she has in her baggy sleeves. (Among the most cherished is a knife sent to her father by the Mikado, Goro explains, with a message—which was obeyed.) She tells Pinkerton, out of her relatives'

¹ English version by R. H. Elkin (Ricordi).

hearing, that the previous day she went to the Mission and embraced Christianity, to make her fit to be his wife.

The Imperial Commissioner, who has been in the background, comes forward, reads the marriage contract and hands it to Goro, who has it signed by Pinkerton, Butterfly and her relations. Congratulations are offered to the bride, first by her girl-friends and then by the Commissioner and the Official Registrar, who now depart. So does Sharpless, warning Pinkerton to be careful. The guests are beginning to drink a Japanese toast to the couple ('O Kami! O Kami!') when the old Bonze (a priest), Butterfly's uncle, arrives. He demands to know what Butterfly was doing at the Mission, accusing her of renouncing her religion and her relatives. The relatives are scandalized: they immediately refuse to have anything more to do with her, and Pinkerton orders them off. Their accusing voices die away in the distance.

From within, Suzuki is heard muttering her prayers. A moment later she emerges with her mistress's white nightgown; Butterfly retires to a corner and prepares herself. Alone, as evening falls, the couple sing a long, tender love-duet.

ACT II (Part I)

It is three years later. Suzuki is praying, with a prayer-bell, asking the gods to stop Butterfly's weeping. Pinkerton has not returned since being recalled to America soon after the wedding, and they have hardly any money left. Butterfly, still believing he will come back, tries to persuade the more sceptical Suzuki; she looks forward to his return, imagining the scene: 'One fine day' (Un bel dì).

Goro arrives, with Sharpless. Butterfly (who insists on being called Madame Pinkerton) is excited to see them and makes them welcome, but her nervous, bubbling chatter prevents Sharpless from telling her news he has received in a letter from Pinkerton. She asks him at what time of year the robins nest in America—explaining that Pinkerton had promised to return at the robins' nesting time. She mentions that Goro has tried to persuade her to marry the rich Prince Yamadori—who enters at that moment to pay court to her. Goro explains to Sharpless that Butterfly could divorce Pinkerton for desertion under Japanese law, but she interposes by saying that she is an American citizen.

Alone with Butterfly, Sharpless starts to read the letter: her initial excitement changes to dismay when he hints that Pinkerton will not return. Sharpless is deeply touched when Butterfly produces her small son (Trouble), and says that she would rather kill herself than return to her old occupation of dancing to earn them enough to subsist on: 'That your mother should take you' (Che tua madre). Promising to tell Pinkerton of the child's existence, Sharpless leaves. A moment later Suzuki drags in Goro,

who has been spreading tales that no one knows who is the child's father. Butterfly threatens him with a dagger, then pushes him away in disgust.

A cannon shot is heard, the sign that a ship is entering the harbour. Butterfly and Suzuki see that it is a man-o'-war, it is American, and its name is *Abraham Lincoln*—it is Pinkerton's ship! At last he is returning to her! She and Suzuki set about decorating the house with flowers, then Suzuki helps her to prepare herself, making up her face and slipping on her wedding garment. They make three holes in the screen for the two women and the child to watch for Pinkerton's coming. As night falls, distant humming voices are heard, and in the moonlight it can be seen that the child and Suzuki have fallen asleep; only Butterfly is awake, still patiently watching.

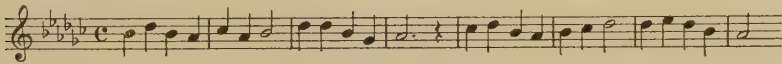
ACT II (Part II)

As the new day dawns, the voices of sailors can be heard from the harbour. Butterfly is still watching. Suzuki wakes and sees that it is daylight; she insists that Butterfly goes upstairs, with the child, promising to call her when Pinkerton comes. A moment later there is a knock and Pinkerton enters with Sharpless. Hearing that Butterfly stayed up all night, and seeing the scattered flowers, Pinkerton is greatly troubled and cannot face her. Suzuki sees a woman outside in the garden and Sharpless tells her that it is Pinkerton's American wife, Kate. Sharpless asks Suzuki to tell Butterfly that Mrs Pinkerton is willing to adopt the child. Suzuki, in anguish, remonstrates but then leaves, and Sharpless chides Pinkerton for his heartless behaviour. He is now remorseful: 'Farewell, O happy home!' (Addio, fiorito asil!).

Pinkerton goes out as Kate enters with Suzuki, promising to treat the child as if it were her own. Butterfly calls Suzuki from upstairs, then comes down, eagerly looking for Pinkerton. Seeing Sharpless and Kate, and Suzuki in tears, she guesses the situation, and Suzuki confirms her fears. She realizes that Kate is Pinkerton's wife and in response to their request she says she will hand over the child if Pinkerton will come in half an hour's time. Sharpless and Kate leave.

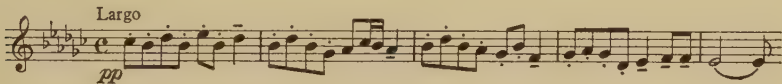
Suzuki tries to comfort the desolate Butterfly, but is sent away. Butterfly takes her father's knife from its case and reads its inscription: 'Death with honour is better than life with dishonour' (Con onor muore chi non può serbar vita con onore). In an effort to restrain her mistress, whose intention she has guessed, Suzuki pushes the child in. Butterfly smothers him with kisses, singing to him 'You! You! Beloved idol' (Tu! Tu! Piccolo iddio). She gives him an American flag and a doll to play with, binds his eyes gently, goes behind a screen and stabs herself. As Pinkerton arrives with Sharpless, she stumbles out, points to the child, and dies.

Puccini incorporated a number of Japanese melodies into his score. (For a full examination, see *Puccini: A Critical Biography*, by Mosco Carner.) We may quote one:



(Ex. 1)

It occurs just at the moment when Butterfly, approaching from off-stage with her girl friends, is seen for the first time:



(Ex. 2)

'One fine day', Butterfly's own most famous aria, is additionally effective on the stage because it suggests 'acting within acting'. Puccini expressly says that Butterfly must 'act the scene [of Pinkerton's hoped-for return to her] as if it were actually taking place'; and the accompaniment is marked 'as if from a distance'. Note that in the accompaniment the melody is doubled at a lower octave and so becomes the bass-part as well, a typical Puccini device:

Andante molto calmo $\text{♩} = 42$
BUTTERFLY

Un bel dì, ve-dre-mo le-var-si un fil di fu-mo sull'es-
tre-mo confin del ma-re e poi la na-ve ap-pa-re

(Ex. 3)

PUCCINI'S LATER OPERAS

After *Madama Butterfly*, Puccini moved onwards from the popularly appealing (and successful) style of *Butterfly*, *La Bohème* and *Tosca* towards one of greater complexity—musical, emotional and psychological. His next opera, *La Fanciulla del West*, was based on the play *The Girl of the Golden West* by David Belasco (to whom he had also been indebted for *Madama Butterfly*); it was composed between 1907, when he saw the play in New York, and 1910, when the opera received its first performance in the same city. The libretto is by Gelfo Civinini and Carlo Zangarini.

Its setting is the Wild West—a mining camp in California, in 1849–50—and a highly exotic one as far as Italian audiences and Puccini himself were concerned. The American atmosphere is emphasized by the use of English expressions (like “Hello”) in the Italian text, and the music itself has some curiously exotic characteristics. The Act III song for Dick Johnson, the bandit ‘hero’ of the piece, shows this exoticism strongly in its near-oriental melody and harmonization, very like the atmospheric manner which Puccini had used to evoke Japan in *Madama Butterfly* and was later to use to evoke China in *Turandot*.

The opera’s score is in fact particularly colourful and markedly influenced in its orchestration and harmony by Debussy’s music of the years immediately preceding. The music of the first act is especially potent in conveying the atmosphere of the saloon bar, with the hard-drinking, hard-gambling but recurrently homesick miners. Minnie, the owner of the tavern, is one of Puccini’s most idealized heroines. She stands for home in the eyes of these men, and is both a mother-figure and a Sunday-school teacher to them. But later, to save the man she loves, she is prepared to cheat in a card game with Jack Rance, the villainous sheriff—a complete woman indeed! The success in performance of this imperfect opera largely depends on the effectiveness of the soprano in this crucial role.

After the unsuccessful comic opera *La Rondine* (The Swallow), Puccini composed a set of three one-act operas which he called *Il Trittico* (The Triptych—meaning a three-panelled painting). The three were to represent different aspects of life and together were to make up a single evening’s entertainment. They indeed did so at their first performance (New York, 1918), but nowadays are rarely all performed together. This is partly because such an evening is very long (as Puccini himself came to recognize), and partly because the middle opera seems to many to fall below the other two in quality.

The first, *Il Tabarro* (The Cloak), was an adaptation from a French play by Didier Gold. The libretto is by Giuseppe Adami. Telling a tale of infidelity and murder, it is a tense, terse drama, strongly in the ‘realist’ tradition. The setting is a barge in the river Seine, and the music manages to

suggest the flowing motion of the river, to reflect the Parisian atmosphere and even to depict the motor-horns and other background sounds of the city. The cloak of the title is used by the middle-aged barge-owner first to offer warmth and protection to his young wife, later to cover the body of her lover—with which he confronts her in the opera's grim final moments. The construction of the whole work is thematic, in Puccini's usual way, and the barge-owner's two references to his cloak—in his plea for his wife's love and his final gesture of disgust towards her—exhibit the same theme in different guises.

Suor Angelica (Sister Angelica), which has a cast only of women, gives a romanticized (not to say sentimental) treatment of a religious subject. With a libretto by Giovacchino Forzano, it is set in a convent in the late seventeenth century. The musical style is gentle and feminine, with occasional modal touches hinting at early church music. The title-role portrays the daughter of a noble family who, having had an illegitimate son, has become a nun. The most dramatic scene is the central one where the Princess, Angelica's harsh aunt—Puccini's only major mezzo-soprano role—visits the convent with the news that the child is dead. Distraught, Angelica poisons herself; but, before she dies, distant voices of angels are heard, and Angelica sees a 'miraculous' vision of her dead child, signifying that she has been forgiven by the Blessed Virgin.

Tragedy and sentiment dominate *Il Tabarro* and *Suor Angelica*; *Gianni Schicchi* is a comedy, if a slightly macabre one. Forzano's libretto enlarges on a hint in Dante's *Divine Comedy* about a real-life rogue called Gianni Schicchi who lived in thirteenth-century Florence: Schicchi is believed to have helped falsify a will, partly in favour of the relatives of the dead man but more in his own favour. It is a vivacious work with a superb sureness of comedy, and it has a dominating baritone title-role; but the score's most famous numbers go to the young lovers—the tenor, who has 'Our Florence like a tree is firmly planted' (*Firenze é come un albero fiorito*), and the soprano, Schicchi's daughter, with the sentimental (or mock-sentimental?) 'Oh my beloved daddy' (*O mio babbino caro*).

In *Turandot* Puccini returned to an oriental scene (as in *Madama Butterfly*) and to a strongly stressed connection between sex and cruelty (as in *Tosca*). In fact, on any normal consideration, the story (to a libretto by Adami and Renato Simoni) is perhaps the most repulsive that any opera audience is regularly called on to enjoy. Richard Strauss's *Salome* is at least killed for her perversion, but the love-triumph of the Chinese princess Turandot and her 'unknown' suitor, Calaf by name, is a triumph based on the acceptance of the torture and death of Liù, Calaf's devoted slave-girl. Liù is indeed the only character of the story who shows any positive action for good.

Moreover, there are several incidental touches in Puccini's opera (not in

Gozzi's original play of 1762, *Turandotte*) which specially emphasize horror and cruelty—among them the personal appearance of the executioner and the procession taking the previous rejected suitor (condemned to death for failure to answer Turandot's riddles) to the scaffold. But it is not difficult in the theatre to let moral scruples be overpowered by the force of Puccini's resplendent score. The power of love to defeat all obstacles is of course a familiar topic in opera, and indeed in mythology—though more commonly it is a woman's love than a man's. Here it is Calaf's love that brings about the transformation of the cruel Turandot.

Puccini died in November 1924; he had not completed the love-duet and the ensuing final scene, though he had left sketches for them. On Toscanini's advice the completion was entrusted after his death to Franco Alfano (1876–1954), a composer whose style had been influenced by Puccini and who had himself once considered composing an opera on the same subject. This completion, using Puccini's sketches, has been found by musicologists to show a distinct break with Puccini's style; it is fair to say that few ordinary opera-goers, even seasoned ones, experience this in the theatre.

Turandot is objectively the richest (that is, the biggest and most complex in sound) of Puccini's scores. Its harmony is more advanced than that of any of his previous works. As well as a very large orchestra in the pit (including tuned gongs and other unusual percussion), there is an off-stage band of brass, two alto saxophones, percussion and organ. The two saxophones double the melody sung by the children in the first act, one of several authentic Chinese tunes incorporated in the score: in its melody and in Puccini's striking harmonization (plus the effect of children's voices) it denotes serenity. It is thus directly opposed to the violent, tortured chromatic themes like the one which thunders out in the first two bars of the opera and which portrays Turandot's cruelty.

When Calaf submits to the ritual trial of three riddles, which is to win him either Turandot's hand or a cruel death, an extraordinary battle of keys takes place. The theme proclaimed by Turandot is 'trumped' by the Prince who sings it in a higher key; then when Turandot tries to 'trump' him with a higher key still, he keeps up with her, as it were matching force for force. But there are gentle things in the opera, too: the start of Act II, where the court officials, Ping, Pang and Pong recall happier times, includes some of the most exquisitely delicate music Puccini ever penned.

Liù is one of Puccini's most touching characters—her torture, her aria, 'Thou who with ice art girdled' (*tu che di gel sei cinta*), her heroic suicide and then her funeral procession constitute the big scene of compassion in the opera. But the dominating tune in the work remains the Prince's: it is 'None shall sleep tonight!' (*Nessun dorma*). This music returns, in Alfano's ending, to provide the eventual salutation to victorious love.



Metropolitan Opera Archives

L'ELISIR D'AMORE

Enrico Caruso as Nemorino and Adamo Didur as Dr. Dulcamara in the 1916 Metropolitan production.



Lauterwasser

TRISTAN UND ISOLDE

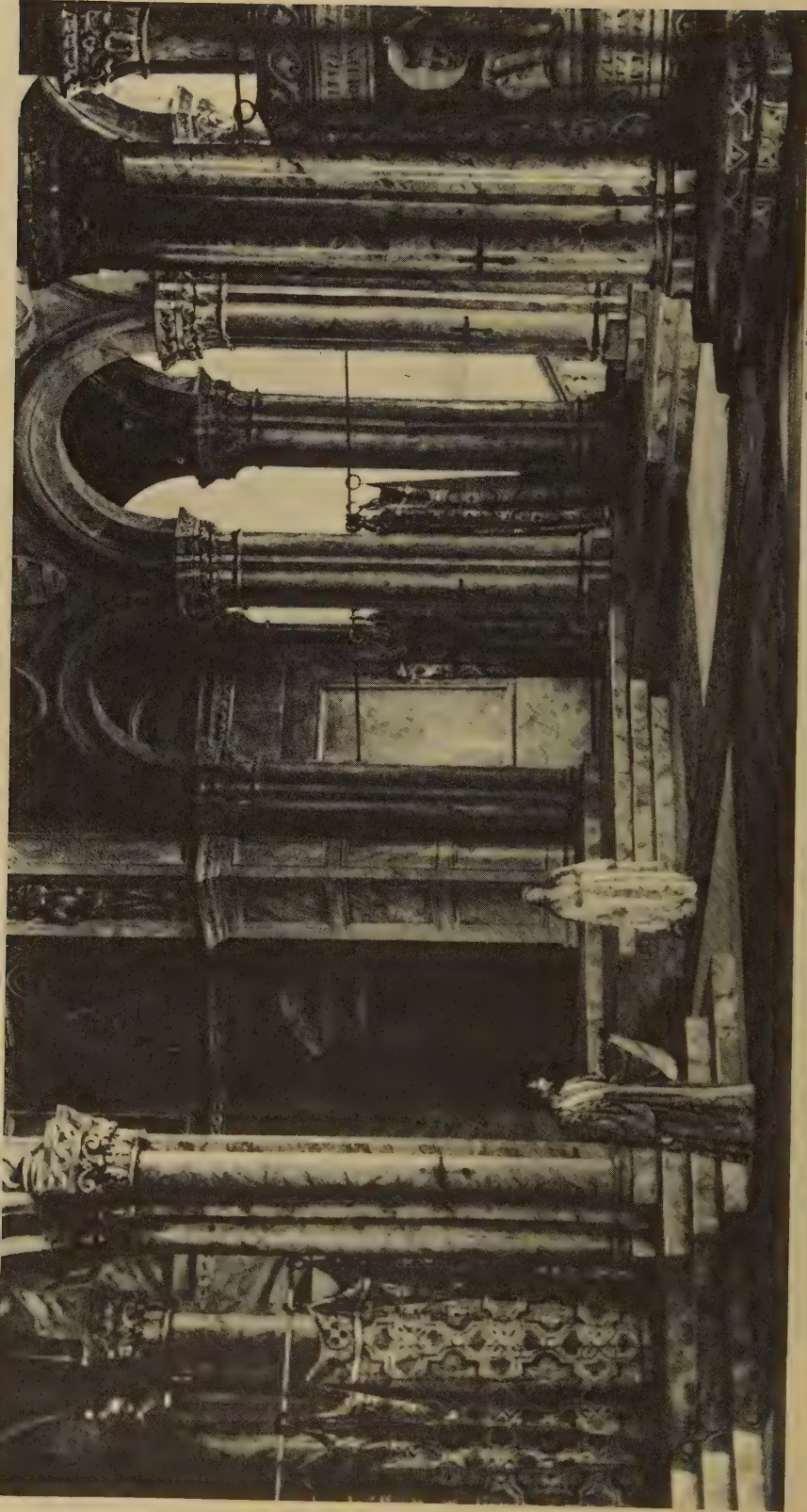
Birgit Nilsson as Isolde and Wolfgang Windgassen as Tristan in Wieland Wagner's production at Bayreuth.



Metropolitan Opera Archives

DIE ZAUBERFLÖTE

Edward Lankow as Sarastro in the 1912 Metropolitan production



Opera News

OTELLO

Othello confronts Desdemona in Act III of Verdi's opera. This is the set used by the Budapest Opera.



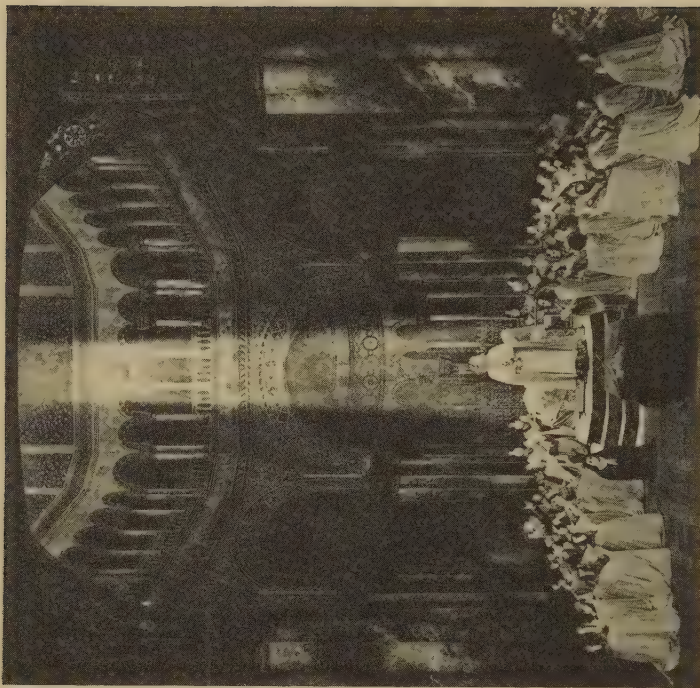
Metropolitan Opera Archives

THE GOLDEN COCKEREL

Rosina Galli as the Queen of Shemakhan and Adolf Bolm as Dodon in the Metropolitan's 1918 production.



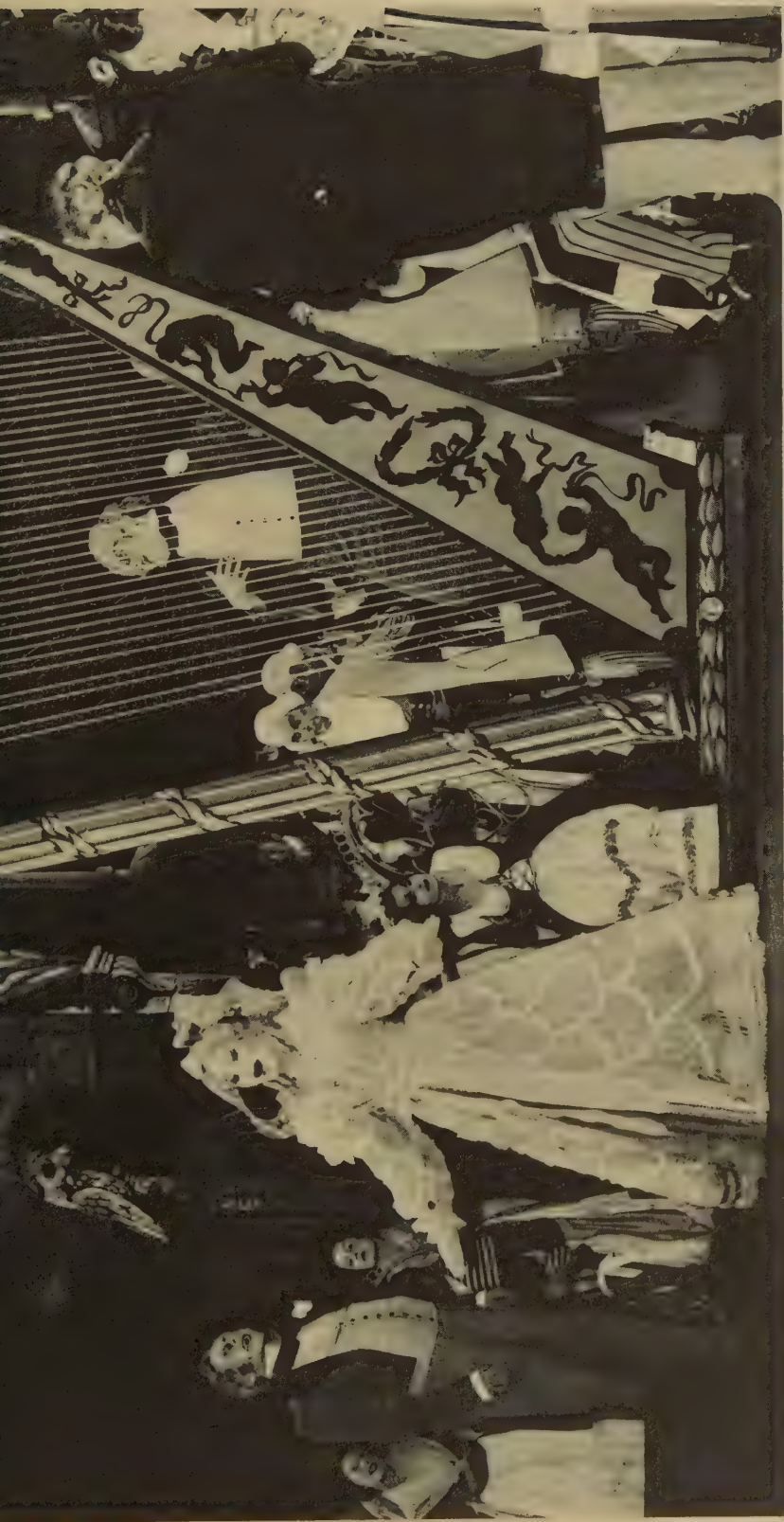
Opera News



Opera News

PARSIFAL

At Bayreuth Wieland Wagner has placed the emphasis on his grandfather's music and discarded the opulent sets of a generation ago in favor of impressionistic scenery and dramatic lighting effects.



Barrattis

LES CONTES D'HOFFMANN

The doll Olympia (Mattiwilda Dobbs) sings to the harp, accompanied by Spalanzani (Geraint Evans), in the Covent Garden production.



Opera News

COSÌ FAN TUTTE

This production at Glyndebourne, England, is typical of the witty, intimate style of that company.



Opera News

TURANDOT

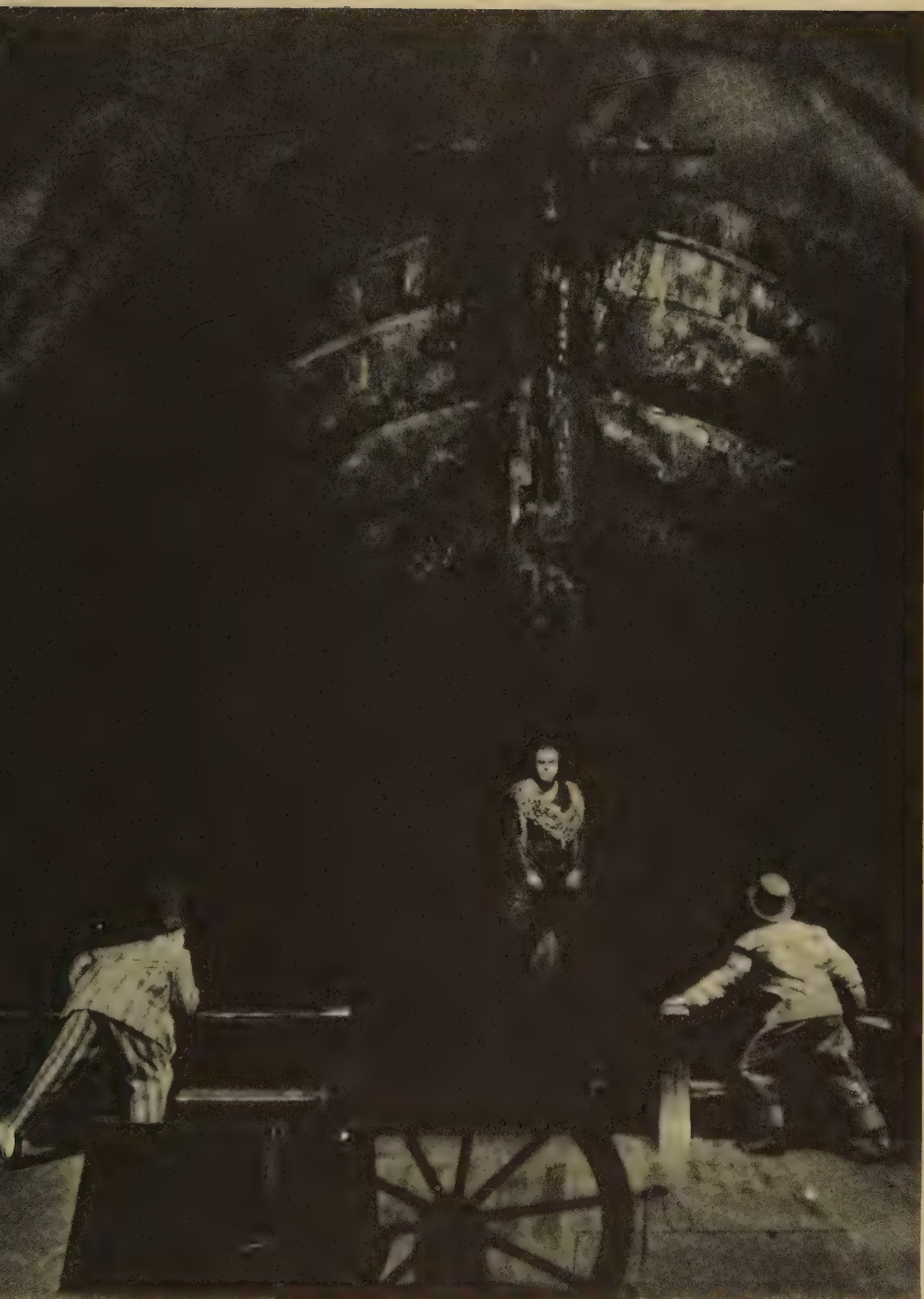
An outdoor performance given at the Teatro Comunale in Florence.



McBean

ORFEO ED EURYDICE

Kathleen Ferrier as Orpheus subduing the furies in the Glyndebourne production.



Lauterwasser

DER FLIEGENDE HOLLÄNDER

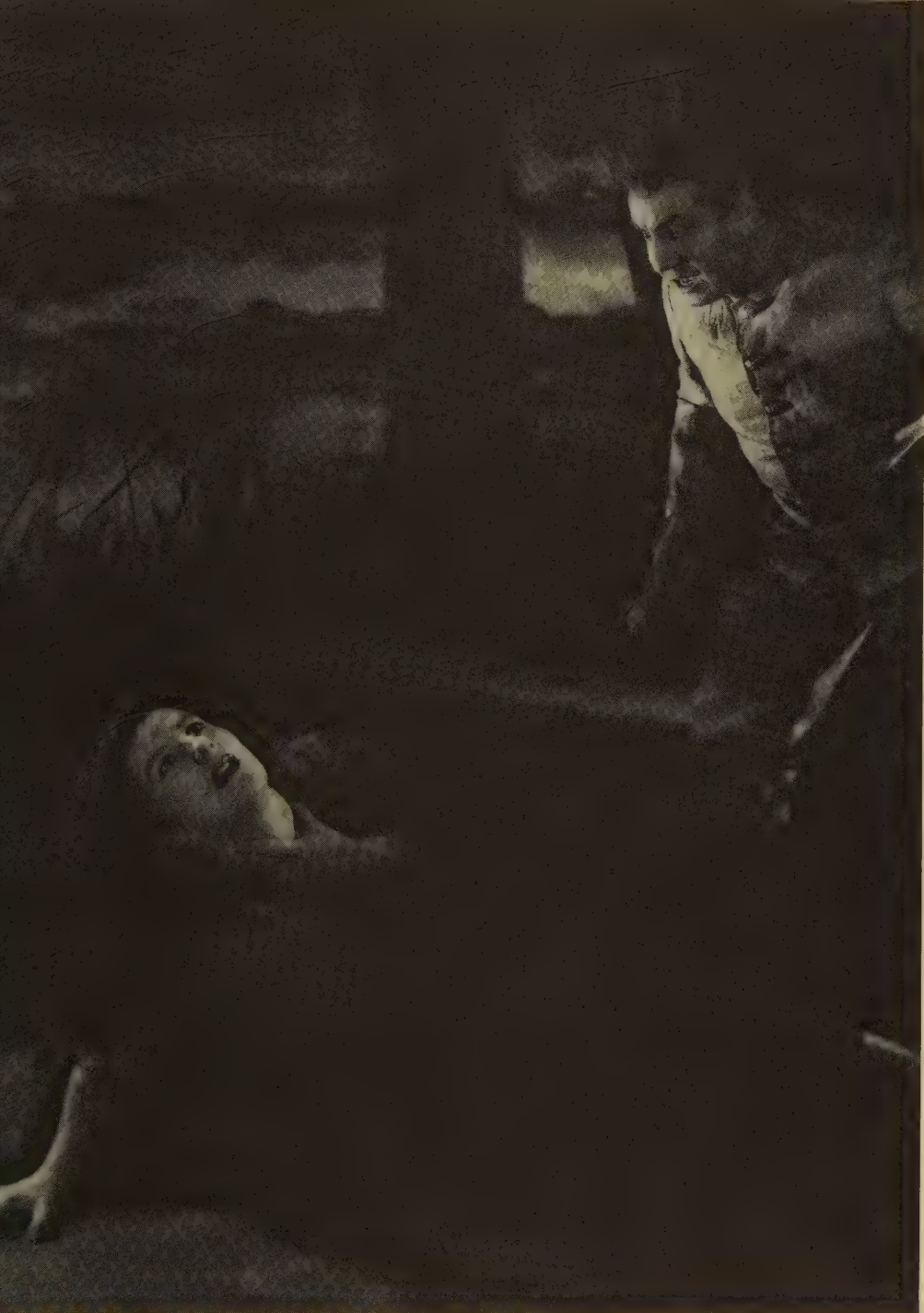
The Flying Dutchman (George London) appears mysteriously to the Norwegian seamen in Wieland Wagner's Bayreuth production.



Opera News

FIDELIO

The final scene of Beethoven's only opera as produced at the Vienna State Opera.



McBean

WOZZECK

Wozzeck murders Marie: Christl Goltz and Geraint Evans in the Covent Garden production.



Sovfoto

PRINCE IGOR

A recent production of Borodin's opera at the Bolshoi in Moscow.



Museum of Modern Art

CARMEN

A 1913 silent movie version of Bizet's work starred Geraldine Farrar and Wallace Reid. This film was directed by Cecil B. De Mille.



Sovfoto

BORIS GODUNOV

Act IV of the ornate production given this work at the Bolshoi in Moscow.



Museum of Modern Art

AIDA

A wide-screen, spectacular version of *Aida* starred Sophia Loren and Luciano della Marra. The dubbed voices were those of Renata Tebaldi and Giuseppe Campora.



Opera News

DER ROSENKAVALIER

Octavian (Sena Jurinac) presents the rose to Sophie (Hilde Güden) in the Vienna State Opera production



Sim

OEDIPUS REX

Raimund Herinx as Creon with the men of Thebes in the Sadler's Wells production.

RUGGIERO LEONCAVALLO

(1858-1919)

THE exploration of low life (as in *La Bohème*) and of the extremes of emotional agony (as in *Tosca*) are marks of 'realistic' opera. The Italian word *verismo*, sometimes encountered in English contexts, simply denotes realism in its theatrical and literary sense. The soprano-tenor-baritone plot of *Tosca*, and also its musical method and its type of dramatic tension, were curiously foreshadowed four years earlier in *André Chénier* (1896) by Umberto Giordano (1867-1948).

Theatrical realism attracted another of Puccini's contemporaries, Ermanno Wolf-Ferrari (1876-1948), in *I gioielli della Madonna* (1911; The Jewels of the Madonna); but Wolf-Ferrari also composed two longer-lasting comedies in a mock-formal vein which looks back to the eighteenth century—*I quattro rusteghi* (1906; known in Britain in Dent's translation as 'School for Fathers') and *Il segreto di Susanna* (1909; Susanna's Secret).

Among Italian composers, one who made a more radical approach to musical composition was Ferruccio Busoni (1866-1924) who wrote four operas, with librettos (in German) by himself: *The Bride-choosing* (Die Brautwahl; 1912), *Arlecchino* (1917), *Turandot* (1917) and *Doctor Faust* (unfinished, completed by Philipp Jarnach and performed in 1925). The last is the most highly regarded, but intellectual esteem rather than theatrical success has been Busoni's fate.

Celebrated in the earliest tradition of Italian opera are 'Cav and Pag'—to use the colloquial English names for the two works which form an almost invariable double bill. *Cavalleria Rusticana* by Pietro Mascagni and *Pagliacci* by Ruggiero Leoncavallo are treated here in reverse order, since Leoncavallo was slightly the elder composer. Leoncavallo wrote an unsuccessful *La Bohème* at the same time as Puccini's, but *Pagliacci* is his only well-known piece.

PAGLIACCI

(Clowns)

Libretto by the composer

First performed: Milan, 1892

Two Acts

Cast in order of singing:

Tonio (in the play, Taddeo, a clown)	<i>baritone</i>
Canio (in the play, Pagliaccio)	<i>tenor</i>
A villager	<i>baritone</i>
Beppe (in the play, Arlecchino)	<i>tenor</i>
A villager	<i>tenor</i>
Nedda, Canio's wife (in the play, Colombina)	<i>soprano</i>
Silvio, a villager	<i>baritone</i>

Chorus of villagers and peasants

The scene is laid near Montalto, in Calabria, 1865-70

A play within a play: the device is an ancient one (Shakespeare has made it familiar to us). The comic scene enacted for a village audience by a group of strolling players becomes a tragic drama of real life.

Additionally, the composer (who was his own librettist) introduces a prologue spoken by one of the actors in costume but supposedly giving a message direct from the author. This is, of course, also an ancient theatrical device, and its effect of providing a frame (and thus an effect of theatrical 'remoteness') for the subsequent action is similar to the mid-twentieth-century use of a prologue or epilogue (as in Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia* and Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress*). In its own period it was particularly bold, and it is still very telling.

The title of the work is just *Pagliacci* (Clowns). The usual introductory *I* (The) is unauthentic. In the standard English version the familiar English harlequinade-names of Punchinello, Harlequin and Columbine replace Pagliaccio, Arlecchino and Colombina.

ACT I

The orchestral introduction is interrupted by the singer who is about to play the role of Tonio. He pushes his head between the curtains and then steps forward, telling the audience that he is the Prologue. He announces that the drama they are to witness, though represented by actors, is nevertheless about real human beings with ordinary human feelings. The curtain rises.

On the afternoon of the Feast of the Assumption, a troupe of travelling actors has arrived, and villagers, in festive mood, come to greet them. Canio, leader of the troupe, steps down from the wagon and thanks the villagers for their welcome, announcing that a performance will take place at eleven o'clock that evening in the improvised theatre. Canio's wife, Nedda, begins to alight from the wagon and Tonio—a hunchback, vainly in love with her—moves to help her; but Canio angrily pushes him aside and lifts her down himself. The people laugh at Tonio, who mutters that he will avenge his humiliation.

A villager invites Canio and his colleagues to come to the tavern. Beppe says he will come too, but Tonio declines. Another villager jocularly remarks that Tonio is staying so as to make love to Nedda. Canio solemnly warns that although such a situation might be funny on the stage, in real life it would not: 'Such a game' (*Un tal gioco*).¹ Nedda hears and is anxious, but Canio assures the villagers that he does not really suspect her. Bagpipes are heard, then bells: as evening descends, the villagers go off, imitating the clang of the bells and singing of love.

Alone, Nedda sings nervously of her husband's suspicions, then, carried away by the sound of the birds, she breaks into happy song: 'High aloft they cry' (*Stridono lassù*). As she finishes, Tonio appears. She mocks heartlessly at the hunchbacked clown and his declaration of love; eventually he can bear no more and tries to force a kiss from her, but she has picked up a donkey-whip and strikes him across the face. In pain and humiliation, he goes off, swearing revenge.

A moment later Silvio, a villager who is Nedda's real lover, appears. He pleads with Nedda to fly with him, but she begs him not to tempt her. Eventually she gives way. During their long duet Tonio enters, unseen but not unseeing. He fetches Canio, who is too late to see the departing Silvio but just in time to hear her words: 'Tonight and for ever I am thine' (*A stanotte e per sempre tua sarò*). Tonio tells Nedda that it was he who brought Canio back. Canio demands to know her lover's name, which she refuses to give. In his fury he almost stabs her, but Beppe intervenes, calms him and leads Nedda off, while Tonio promises to watch for the man. Beppe returns for a moment, telling Canio to dress for the performance and Tonio to beat his drum to attract the crowds. Left alone, Canio faces the fact that despite his private tragedy he has still to be the clown and amuse his public: 'On with the motley' (*Vesti la giubba*).

ACT II

Later that evening the crowd begins to assemble for the performance, Tonio calling on them to 'Walk up! Walk up!' (*Avanti, avanti*). Beppe helps to sort out the seating, and in the general confusion Nedda and Silvio manage to exchange a few words. The people are beginning to get impatient when the bell rings and the curtain rises on the play.

To a mock eighteenth-century minuet, Colombina (Nedda) is seen on her own. Her husband, Pagliaccio, is away, she says, and the clown Taddeo is at market, so all is safe. Soon the serenade of Arlecchino (Beppe) is heard. But before he can enter Taddeo (Tonio) comes in and makes a grotesque declaration of love, in the course of which Arlecchino enters by the window. Arlecchino throws out Taddeo, who promises to keep watch for them. They sing a little love-duet (in gavotte rhythm) over their

¹ English version by Frederic E. Weatherly (Ascherberg, Hopwood & Crew).

supper, but are interrupted by a warning from Taddeo—Pagliaccio (Canio) is approaching. Arlecchino leaves, and as Pagliaccio enters he hears Colombina say 'Tonight and for ever I am thine' (the very words Canio had heard Nedda use earlier in reality).

At this point Canio, unnerved, hesitantly tries to go on with the play, and in his role of Pagliaccio accuses Colombina of having a lover; she says that her visitor was only Taddeo, whom she brings in, and Taddeo assures Pagliaccio with a meaningful sneer that his wife is true to him. Now Canio can stand no more; he forgets the play and fiercely demands to know her lover's name. She tries to laugh it off, calling him Pagliaccio. 'No! Pagliaccio no more!' (Nò! Pagliaccio non son!) he bursts out in fury.

The audience (but not Silvio) suppose this is really splendid, true-to-life acting, and call 'bravo'. Nedda for a moment replies in her own true nature, but when once more he demands her lover's name she tries to resume the play. Thinking she is mocking him, he threatens to kill her. The audience begin to get agitated as they realize that the actors are no longer acting. During their angry, impassioned dialogue Silvio tries to rush forward; then Beppe, restrained by Tonio, tries to make a move. Canio stabs Nedda; she calls to Silvio for help, and as he rushes to her aid Canio stabs him too. Turning to the audience, he says: 'The comedy is ended!' (*La commedia è finita!*).

* * *

The notion of a play within a play, which is the fundamental dramatic point of the opera, also provides the two strongest and best-known musical excerpts—the baritone's prologue and the tenor's 'On with the motley' (*Vesti la giubba*). The one, in fact, melodically anticipates the other. The prologue's final line 'Ring up the curtain!' takes the baritone to a splendidly effective high G—not in the score (where the note is D) but in all performances.

The inner play features the traditional characters of the harlequinade, and the point is musically made by the old-fashioned, artificial style of music. This, for instance, is Arlecchino's serenade to Colombina, with pizzicato strings imitating a serenader's guitar:

Allegretto un poco moderato ♩ = 120
BEPPE

O Co-lom-bi-na, il te-ne-ro fi-do Ar-lec-chin

(Ex. 1)

PIETRO MASCAGNI

(1863-1945)

ONE work made Mascagni famous, the one-act *Cavalleria Rusticana*: and, very remarkably, it was his *first* opera. He wrote fourteen more, none as successful—though *Friend Fritz* (L'Amico Fritz; 1891), *Iris* (1898, set in Japan) and one or two others are occasionally still given.

CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA

(Rustic Chivalry)

*Libretto by Giovanni Targioni-Tozzetti and Guido Menasci,
after a play by Giovanni Verga*

First performed: Rome, 1890

One Act

Cast in order of singing:

Turiddu, a peasant

Santuzza, a peasant girl

Mamma Lucia, Turiddu's mother, keeper of an inn

Alfio, a carrier

Lola, Alfio's wife

tenor

soprano

contralto

baritone

mezzo-soprano

Chorus of villagers

The scene is laid in a Sicilian village

Two bold theatrical touches distinguish the score of *Cavalleria Rusticana*. Within the overture, which is based on tunes to be heard in the opera itself, a serenade is sung behind the curtain—supposedly the secret serenade sung by Turiddu to his illicit love, Lola. It is as though we are not just 'hearing an overture' but are sensing, through the closed curtains, the life going on in the Sicilian village which is soon to be visually revealed. (In fact, Lola makes her first entrance with a song that seems like a recollection of this.)

Then, later in the opera, an intermezzo is played *with the curtain up*: our eyes concentrate on the empty stage, stimulated by the orchestra to recall what we have seen.

The meaning of the title is really 'The Rustic Code of Honour': the

opera shows this code operating in a working village community, as earlier operas had shown the operation of codes of honour in aristocratic society. The climax is violent, with a duel off-stage; the soprano, tenor, and baritone express in powerful solos the fierce pride from which the violence results; and a strong choral part emphasizes the collective strength of village life.

*

Early on the morning of Easter Day, the church bells are ringing and people are entering church. Their songs in praise of spring are heard. Santuzza, heart-broken at being deserted by her lover, Turiddu, comes to his mother's inn to ask if he is there. He is away buying wine, says his mother, Lucia, but Santuzza says he was seen in the village the previous night.

Alfio the carrier enters with his horses, singing gaily, and the square fills with people, who echo his song before they move off or enter the church. He asks Lucia for wine: she replies that she has none—Turiddu has gone to get some. He is surprised, since he saw him near his own cottage that morning. Lucia is about to exclaim but Santuzza quickly silences her. Alfio leaves. The sound of the organ and prayers are heard from the church, echoed by the people in the square, led by Santuzza and Lucia in the Resurrection hymn.

Left alone as all the others enter the church, Lucia asks Santuzza why she silenced her earlier. Santuzza explains—'Mother, you know the story' (*Voi lo sapete*)—that Turiddu had been engaged to Lola before he went away to war; then Lola had married Alfio, and Santuzza became Turiddu's lover; but now the jealous Lola, although married, has drawn Turiddu's affection away from Santuzza.

Lucia goes into the church and Turiddu enters. Santuzza reproaches him for his conduct with Lola: at first he denies it, then tells her that no amount of pleading will move him. Lola approaches, singing 'O gentle flower of love' (*Fior di giaggiolo*),¹ converses with them briefly, mocking at Santuzza, and passes into the church, inviting Turiddu to follow. He is on the point of following but Santuzza begs him to hear her ('Turiddu, ascolta!'). She passionately begs him to return to her ('No, no, Turiddu'), but he says that all is over between them. As he goes off into the church he throws her to the ground in fury.

Alfio enters and the jilted Santuzza tells him of his wife's infidelity with Turiddu. He swears to avenge his honour in blood, and both depart.

The stage is empty (nearly all the villagers are in the church) as the *Intermezzo* is played. Then, the service over, the people come out of church and happily head for their homes. Turiddu asks Lola to join the group outside his mother's inn, and he sings a gay Brindisi (drinking

¹ English version by Frederic E. Weatherly (Ascherberg, Hopwood & Crew).

song): 'See the merry wine' (Viva il vino). Alfio arrives. He insultingly declines the glass which Turiddu fills for him. The women, sensing sinister happenings, lead Lola off. Alfio and Turiddu exchange a few words, then Turiddu bites Alfio's ear, the traditional Sicilian manner of accepting a challenge to a duel. Turiddu tells Alfio not to blame Lola for what has happened, and he expresses his fear for Santuzza should he be killed.

As the others go off, Lucia enters. Turiddu asks her for her blessing and charges her to look after Santuzza if he fails to return. Terrified, she guesses what is happening and calls after him desperately as he goes. Santuzza enters and the two women embrace. An agitated crowd gathers. In the distance a woman's voice is heard saying that Turiddu has been killed. Santuzza, Lucia and the assembled crowd scream, and the two women fall to the ground.

* * *

Cavalleria Rusticana is a story of love stolen and avenged, but there is no love-song in it after the serenade behind the curtain (before the opera starts) and no love-duet at all. The big duet expresses Santuzza's love for Turiddu, it is true, but on Turiddu's part it expresses his indifference towards her. Its striking melody (to the words 'Stay, stay, Turiddu') partly depends for its impact on a strong descending bass:

Andante appassionato
SANTUZZA

Voice

No, no, Tu - rid - - - du, ri -

Orch.

- ma - ni, ri - ma - ni, an - co - ra -

(Ex. 1)

It is noteworthy that the opera's other memorable vocal line, part of the Easter Hymn ('O rejoice that the Lord has arisen'), has very much the same heavy support in a trudging bass, and also has the characteristically insistent triplet movement for a background:

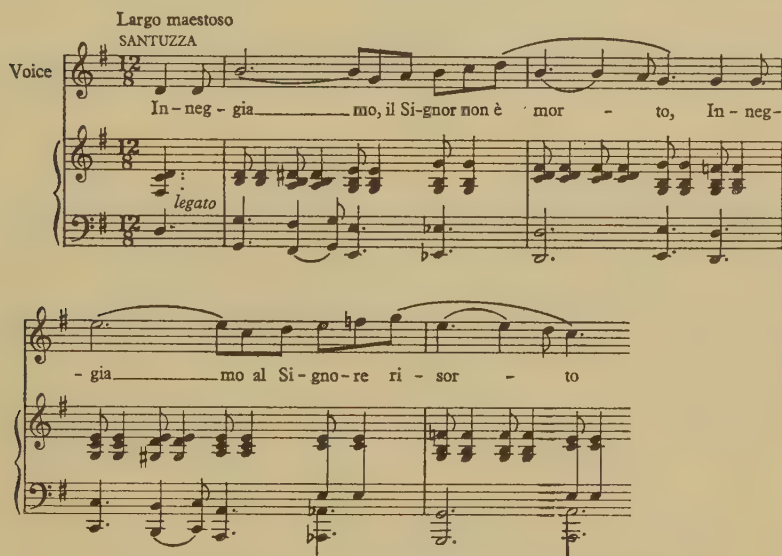
Largo maestoso
SANTUZZA

Voice

In - neg - gia ——— mo, il Si - gnor non è mor - to, In - neg -

legato

- gia ——— mo al Si - gno - re ri - sor - to



(Ex. 2)

X

ENGELBERT HUMPERDINCK

(1854-1921)

WAGNER influenced operatic composers everywhere—composers as dissimilar as Puccini, Dvořák and Sullivan. On German and Austrian composers his influence was, naturally, direct. Of these, Humperdinck was Wagner's professed disciple, and worked with him at Bayreuth on the production of *Parsifal*. *Hänsel und Gretel*, the first of Humperdinck's own six operas, was the only one to enjoy lasting success.

HÄNSEL UND GRETEL

(Hansel and Gretel)

Libretto by Adelheid Wette, after the Brothers Grimm

First performed: Weimar, 1893

Three Acts

Cast in order of singing:

Gretel	<i>soprano</i>
Hänsel	<i>mezzo-soprano</i>
Gertrud, their mother	<i>mezzo-soprano</i>
Peter, their father, a broom-maker	<i>baritone</i>
The Sandman (Sleep-fairy)	<i>soprano</i>
The Dew Fairy	<i>soprano</i>
The Witch	<i>mezzo-soprano</i>

Chorus of children

Adelheid Wette, the composer's sister, modified a familiar fairy-tale of the Brothers Grimm to make the libretto for *Hansel and Gretel*. (The boy's name is really Hänsel; but the form and pronunciation 'Hansel' has become standard in English performances.) Never before had an opera for children won such an international success. The two child roles need to be impersonated by women, however: it was left for Benjamin Britten to write successful operas with children singing leading roles—in *The*

Little Sweep (the core of *Let's Make an Opera!*), *The Turn of the Screw* and *Noye's Fludde* (see page 350).

There is thus a marked preponderance of women's voices in the original score. But a recent German production has successfully used a tenor as a comically grotesque witch, and the part of the Sandman might well be given to a baritone instead of a soprano. In any form the opera retains a great charm, simple on the surface but with a good deal of musical subtlety beneath.

ACT I

Hänsel and Gretel are seen in a small, impoverished-looking broom-maker's hut. Gretel is knitting, Hänsel is making brooms; both are hungry and their parents are away. They try hard to keep cheerful, Gretel taking the lead. Eventually they dance, more and more energetically, until they tumble on to the floor. At that moment their mother comes in. She is annoyed to find them playing when they should have been hard at work. In her anger she knocks down and breaks a jug, full of milk which was to have served as the supper. So she dispatches them to the Ilsenstein woods with a basket, telling them to bring it back full of strawberries instead.

Alone, she sits down, exhausted, wondering how to provide food for her starving family. Soon the father comes in, in gay mood, having had a successful day's business and a few drinks on the way home. At first she is irritated, but irritation changes to delight when he unpacks a large basket of food. He asks about the children: she tells him that they were misbehaving, and about the milk jug (over which they can now laugh) and that she sent them to the Ilsenstein woods. He is horror-struck, for in the woods, he tells her, there is a fearsome witch who rides on brooms (he illustrates with one of his besoms) and cooks and eats little children. They both rush off to bring Hänsel and Gretel back.

ACT II

In the forest, the two children are singing quietly as Gretel makes a garland and a nosegay of roses and Hänsel fills the basket with strawberries. They hear a cuckoo, and in imitation of the pirate bird they steal a few strawberries from the basket. Quickly they finish the whole lot, then realize that they must refill the basket and that it is getting too dark to see clearly. They begin to get a little afraid at the strange shapes in the twilight, and they call for help—to be answered only by echoes and by the cuckoo, now mysterious. Their fear grows as it becomes misty.

Then suddenly the mist partly rises, to disclose the Sandman, who calms them with his song and settles them down to sleep. They say their prayers, 'When at night I go to sleep' (*Abends will ich schlafen gehn*).¹ As sleep

¹ English version by Constance Bache (Schott).

finally overcomes them, a bright light breaks through the darkness and the mist and fourteen angels, in shining white, come down a ladder and group themselves round the children in a 'Dream Pantomime'.

ACT III

The Dew Fairy comes to arouse the sleeping children. Gretel wakes first, then calls Hänsel. They talk of the dream of angels, which they both had. As the distant mist lifts, they excitedly see that they are near a gingerbread house. Naturally, they go towards it, not without a little trepidation at first on Gretel's part, and as they reach it they begin to eat bits of it. A voice from inside asks who is eating the house: 'Nibble, nibble, mousekin!' (Knusper, knusper, knäuschen!). But they ignore it. Suddenly the witch comes out, throwing a rope round Hänsel's neck, and draws them towards her. She promises them quantities of delicious food. Hänsel tries to escape, but she invokes a spell to bind them to the spot.

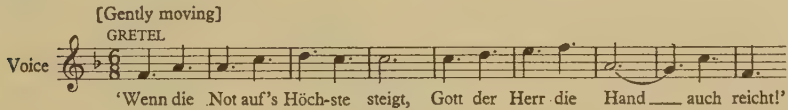
The witch takes Hänsel to a kennel and shuts him in, leaving Gretel while she fetches food for him; he needs fattening, but Gretel does not! Then the witch sends Gretel indoors to set the table (having first broken the spell that kept her motionless). Hänsel, pretending to sleep, overhears the witch planning to push Gretel into the oven so as to cook her and eat her. In her excitement the witch goes for a quick ride on a broomstick, singing, 'So hop, hop, hop, gallop, lop, lop!' She goes back to Hänsel, inspects him, finds him still rather lean, and calls Gretel to bring him more food. While the witch feeds him, Gretel pronounces over him the spell of disenchantment—'Hocus, pocus, elderbush' (Hokus, pokus, Holderbusch)—which she had earlier heard the witch use.

Then the witch tells Gretel to peep into the oven to see if the gingerbread is ready. Hänsel, now able to move, slips out of the kennel and warns Gretel to be careful. She pretends not to understand how to look into the oven, and asks the witch to demonstrate; as she does so, they push her in and bang the door closed. In relief, the two sing a gay waltz: 'Hurrah! Now sing, the witch is dead' (Juchhei! Nun ist die Hexe tot).

The children go back into the house to eat their fill. The oven starts crackling and explodes, and suddenly they find they are surrounded by a troop of motionless children, who a moment earlier had been cakes. When Gretel touches them, they are able to open their eyes, and when Hänsel pronounces the formula for breaking the spell they jump up and thank Hänsel and Gretel for saving them and restoring them to life. Then Hänsel and Gretel's parents appear, and the family are happily reunited. Two children bring out the witch—now baked into a cake—and all join in thanks to God.

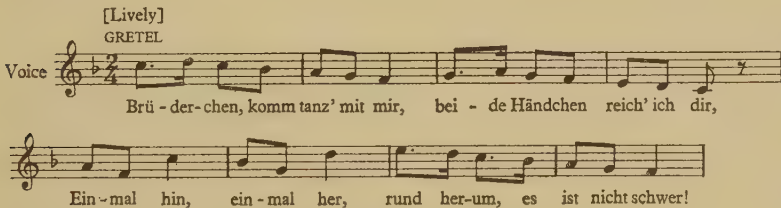
Hänsel und Gretel is usually said to be Wagnerian, and so it is in the way that motives recur throughout. But, unlike Wagner, Humperdinck preserves a structure of clearly separated numbers and uses tunes which are complete in themselves (often appropriately like those of nursery rhymes) rather than fragments of Wagner's 'endless melody'.

In the opening scene, when Hänsel interrupts his playing with Gretel to mention how hungry he is, Gretel replies by recalling the words of comfort their father always speaks: 'When past bearing is our grief, God alone will send relief':



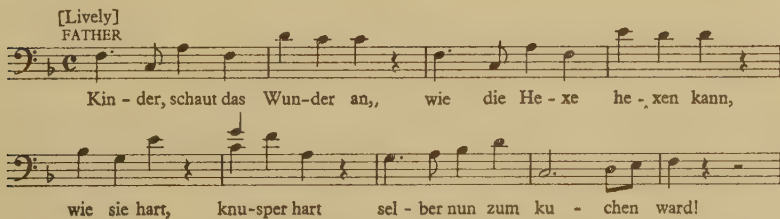
(Ex. 1)

Then Hänsel and Gretel start their dance with tapping of feet and clicking of fingers:



(Ex. 2)

Very cleverly, the first half of Ex. 1 becomes the first line of the children's prayer before they go to sleep in the wood in the second act. And when, almost at the end of the opera, the relieved father greets the children, what he sings develops into a cunningly transformed version of the dance tune of Ex. 2:



(Ex. 3)

and then he recalls his habitual words of comfort (Ex. 1), which are repeated by the assembled company.

The episode when, in the wood, the children become frightened by the dark and are answered only by echoes and by the cuckoo (formerly a friendly sound, now a mysterious one) is evidence of a truly poetic imagination at work in the theatre. The witch herself—whose ride on a broomstick is orchestrally depicted in a prelude to Act II—is not too horrifically portrayed.

RICHARD STRAUSS

(1864-1949)

FOLLOWING Wagner, Richard Strauss embraced a method of composing with recurrent thematic motives and with an opulent orchestral texture which can often stand independently on its own. But Strauss made his operas faster and more concentrated in action. *Salome* and *Elektra* (1909) each play in one continuous scene. *Der Rosenkavalier*, a realistic comedy, takes up three long acts but crams them full of detail: and in place of Wagner's characteristically slow-paced delivery we have fast dialogue-in-music. Moreover, Strauss—not for nothing a contemporary of Zola, Ibsen and Wilde—made deliberate use of plots intended to deliver a shock in the theatre. They duly shocked—and succeeded.

Before these three operas (his most famous) Strauss wrote *Guntram* and *Dearth of Fire* (Feuersnot). Afterwards followed *Ariadne on Naxos* (see page 336); *The Woman without a Shadow* (Die Frau ohne Schatten; 1919); *Intermezzo* (1924); *The Egyptian Helen* (Die Aegyptische Helena; 1928); *Arabella* (1933); *The Silent Woman* (Die schweigsame Frau; 1935); *Peace Day* (Friedenstag; 1938); *Daphne* (1938); *The Love of Danae* (Die Liebe der Danae; completed 1940, produced 1952); and *Capriccio* (1942).

SALOME

*Libretto by Hedwig Lachmann, translated (slightly cut)
from Oscar Wilde's French play*

First performed: Dresden, 1905

One Act

Cast in order of singing:

Narraboth, captain of the royal guard	tenor
Page to Herodias	contralto
Two soldiers	two basses
John the Baptist (Jokanaan)	baritone
A Cappadocian	bass
Salome, daughter of Herodias (by Herodias's former marriage to the brother of Herod, now killed by Herod's command)	soprano

A slave

tenor

Herod, the Tetrarch

tenor

Herodias, his wife

mezzo-soprano

Five Jews

four tenors, bass

Two Nazarenes

tenor, bass

[The role of the executioner is silent.]

The scene is laid in Palestine in biblical times

Richard Strauss put all his power of musical descriptiveness into *Salome*; we are invited to feel the neurotic sexuality of the heroine as both alluring and repulsive. The opera is based on Oscar Wilde's play *Salome* (1894), written in French. Wilde made Salome infatuated with John the Baptist, and King Herod infatuated with Salome (his stepdaughter)—two additions to the New Testament narrative. The play, literally translated into German and slightly cut, forms the libretto for Richard Strauss's one-act opera. Salome herself is supposed to be only in her teens, an impression which sopranos with the necessary stamina for the part do not find it easy to convey. Many, but not all, singers of the role use a stand-in for the Dance of the Seven Veils.

In the German pronunciation of 'Salome', the accent falls on the first syllable.

* * *

On a terrace outside the banqueting hall of Herod's palace, Narraboth, captain of the guard, is with a page and two soldiers (who are guarding the cistern in which John the Baptist is imprisoned). Narraboth, looking into the hall, expresses his admiration of Salome; the page warns him of the danger of looking at her thus. John's voice is heard from the cistern in impassioned prophecy of one 'who will follow me' (Nach mir wird Einer kommen). The soldiers and a Cappadocian converse.

Soon Salome comes out of the banqueting-hall: she is irritated by the Romans, Egyptians and Jews at Herod's feast and by Herod's lascivious glances at her. Hearing the prophet's voice, she is curious to see him; she knows that he has persistently reviled her mother. A slave comes to recall her to the feast, but she dismisses him. Her curiosity is further stimulated when she learns that John is a young man. Obeying Herod's order, the soldiers refuse to let her speak with him, but Narraboth, in response to her promises to look favourably on him, eventually orders them to let the prophet out.

As he comes forth, repulsive in appearance after his imprisonment, he fiercely denounces the evil acts of Herod and especially Herodias. Salome is both fascinated and repelled. He shows no interest in her and merely tries to send her away, but this only inflames her fascination, which soon turns into lust. She expresses luridly her compulsive desire to touch his

body, then his hair, then to kiss his mouth: he refuses, to her frustration and fury. Narraboth vainly tries to restrain her, and, when Salome continues to express her desire to kiss John, Narraboth stabs himself and falls to the ground between them.

Telling Salome that she is accursed, John the Baptist descends into the cistern again. Herod and Herodias, with attendants, enter. Herod is seeking Salome, to Herodias's annoyance; he comes upon Narraboth's body and orders it to be taken away. Then he invites Salome to share with him wine, then fruit and eventually his throne. But she is cold towards him. John the Baptist's voice is heard again, to Herodias's discomfiture; but Herod is afraid of the prophet and refuses to have him silenced or to hand him over to the Jews. Among a group of Jews present a dispute breaks out, in which two Nazarenes (talking of the coming of the Messiah), and eventually Herod, join. John's denunciation of 'the daughter of Babylon' (Tochter Babylons) is taken by Herodias as an attack on her.

Now Herod asks Salome to dance for him. She is at first unwilling, and Herodias orders her not to dance. But the desperate Herod promises her anything she desires; she makes him swear it, and then, despite her mother's protests, she dances the Dance of the Seven Veils. At the end of it, the inflamed Herod asks her what she desires. She asks for the head of John the Baptist ('den Kopf des Jokanaan') on a silver charger.

Herod, aghast, at first refuses. He thinks this is the doing of Herodias (who is delighted) but Salome assures him it is not. He does all he can to dissuade her from her request, promising her fabulous jewels or anything else she wants, but she steadfastly insists on holding him to his oath and having John's head. Eventually Herod gives way, full of foreboding. Herodias takes the ring of death from his finger, giving it to a soldier; he passes it to the executioner, who descends into the cistern.

Salome waits tensely to hear John's cry, but there is none. She imagines that the executioner is afraid and has not killed John, and she tells the page to go to summon soldiers. But then the huge black arm of the executioner appears from the cistern; in his hand is a silver shield, with John's head upon it. Hungrily she kisses its lips, gloating in the triumph of her lust. Herod, repelled and full of fear, decides to go indoors. The lights are put out. Before going in, Herod turns and sees Salome, in the light of the moon, still gloating, her passion sated. He orders the soldiers to kill her ('Man töte dieses Weib!') and they crush her beneath their shields.

* * *

An impressive contrast is created musically between the lascivious, spiritually corrupt atmosphere which embraces Herod, Herodias and Salome, and the uprightness of John the Baptist with his certainty of prophecy. The characteristic themes of the former group are nervous,

angular and shifting in key; but when John first speaks, prophesying that One will follow him who is stronger than he ('I am not worthy to loosen the laces of his shoes'), the orchestra too conveys the feeling of utter firmness, the voice joining in:

[Slow] $\text{♩} = 48$
JOHN THE BAPTIST

Voice

Nach mir — wird Ei — ner kom — men der ist stár —

Orch.

ppp *sfz*

ker als ich. Ich bin nicht wert, — ihm —

pp *espressivo*

(Ex. 1)

The rising figure marked '*espressivo*' stands as a 'prophecy motive' throughout the work.

When John is brought out of his cistern Salome remarks of him: 'He's horrible' (note the expressiveness of the *pianissimo*!):

[In broad tempo] $\text{♩} = 76$
SALÔME

Voice

Er ist schreck — lich

Orch.

pp

(Ex. 2)

The little musical motive here tossed between voice and orchestra, expressing Salome's fascination with John (turning from horror to sexual desire), is one of the motives later used in the Dance of the Seven Veils and then again when Salome demands her reward ('I want you to bring me now, on a silver charger . . .'):

[Slow] ♩ = 80
SALOME

p (sweetly)

Voice

Ich möch-te dass Sie mir gleich in ei - ner

tr b

pp

Sil - ber-schüs-sel

tr b

(Ex. 3)

But what does she want on the silver charger? The suspense is intensified when Herod interrupts with delight, saying how charming is the choice of such a container to hold the promised gift. Only when he has finished does Salome shatter him by naming her choice—and there again, just preceding the words 'John's head' (den Kopf des Jokanaan) the little motive of Ex. 2 and 3 recurs.

DER ROSENKAVALIER

(The Knight of the Rose)

Libretto by Hugo von Hofmannsthal

First performed: Dresden, 1911

Three Acts

Cast in order of singing :

Octavian, Count Rofrano, a young gentleman of noble family	<i>mezzo-soprano</i>
The Feldmarschallin, Princess von Werdenberg	<i>soprano</i>
Baron Ochs auf Lerchenau, the Feldmarschallin's kinsman	<i>bass</i>
Major-domo to the Feldmarschallin	<i>tenor</i>
Four footmen to the Feldmarschallin	<i>two tenors, two basses</i>
Three poor orphans	<i>soprano, mezzo-soprano, contralto</i>
Milliner	<i>soprano</i>
Animal-seller	<i>tenor</i>
Valzacchi, an Italian intriguer	<i>tenor</i>
Italian tenor	<i>tenor</i>
Attorney to the Feldmarschallin	<i>bass</i>
Annina, Valzacchi's companion	<i>contralto</i>
Herr von Faninal, a <i>nouveau-riche</i> , recently ennobled	<i>baritone</i>
Marianne Leitmetzerin, duenna to Sophie	<i>soprano</i>
Major-domo to Faninal	<i>tenor</i>
Sophie, Faninal's daughter	<i>soprano</i>
Landlord of an inn	<i>tenor</i>
Four waiters	<i>tenor, three basses</i>
Four children	<i>sopranos</i>
Commissioner of Police	<i>bass</i>

Chorus of servants, people, musicians, etc.

The scene is laid in Vienna in the early years of the reign of
Empress Maria Theresa (mid-eighteenth century)

'A comedy for music'—such is the original description of the libretto which Hugo von Hofmannsthal wrote for Richard Strauss. There is comedy here indeed but also (especially in the young lovers' music and the final trio) a melting pathos which represents Strauss's late-flowering romantic art at its best.

In *Der Rosenkavalier* we encounter a youth who retains a boy's voice (and so is impersonated by a female singer) and who is called on by the plot to dress up as a girl. This double operatic transvestism was classically brought off by Mozart with the subsidiary role of Cherubino in *The Marriage of Figaro*—but Strauss goes further, applying it to one of the main characters, so that the sole love-interest of the work involves no male singer at all. Strauss later wrote another famous breeches-part in the role of the Composer in the second version of *Ariadne on Naxos* (see page 336).

The breeches-part in *Der Rosenkavalier* is that of Octavian, who is

chosen in the plot to be a 'Rosenkavalier'—that is, the bearer of a ceremonial silver rose from a nobleman to his betrothed. Octavian himself is at this stage in love with a woman older than himself, the Feldmarschallin.

Older, but not *so* much older. We may gather that Octavian (who is seventeen) was not her first lover nor will be her last. 'Feldmarschallin' (abbreviated to Marschallin) means 'wife of the Field-Marshal', following the custom in German whereby a woman uses a female form of her husband's title. The feminine ending '-in' was also formerly applied to surnames: the duenna is thus referred to as 'Leitmetzerin', though her true surname is Leitmetzer.

ACT I

The morning sun streams into the Feldmarschallin's bedroom. Octavian is still kneeling beside her bed, embracing her and pouring out endearments. (She calls him by the French nickname, Quinquin; he calls her Marie-Thérèse or Bichette.) Tinkling bells are heard, and Octavian hides as breakfast is brought for the Feldmarschallin by Mahomet, her negro page-boy. In tender mood, they share it. They hear a man approaching and Octavian hides again. For a moment they think it is her husband, returned from the hunt, but in fact it is her kinsman Baron Ochs, who enters with a footman. Octavian emerges from hiding, disguised in a chambermaid's clothes, and the lecherous Ochs is much taken with 'her'. He has come to tell the Feldmarschallin that he is planning to marry the daughter of the wealthy Herr von Faninal and to ask her advice on the choice of a man to act as his 'Rosenkavalier', bearing the ceremonial silver rose to his betrothed.

The Major-domo enters and tells the Feldmarschallin that various people are waiting to see her. Meanwhile, Ochs flirts outrageously with 'Mariandel', really Octavian in disguise. The Feldmarschallin mildly takes him to task, but he tries hard to justify the eternal pursuit, boasting coarsely of his prowess and experience. The Feldmarschallin offers the services of her kinsman, Octavian, as the Rosenkavalier, showing Ochs a medallion of him; he comments on the resemblance to 'Mariandel'.

The morning's callers are now admitted. First, three poor, high-born girl orphans, ushered in by their mother, present their petition; then a milliner offers her hats and an animal-seller his apes and parrots; then an Italian intriguer, Valzacchi, offers a scandal sheet. The orphans bow themselves out, thanking the Feldmarschallin for her generosity. Her hairdresser enters and starts work on her hair, while a flautist comes in and plays, followed by an Italian tenor who sings an aria ('Di rigori armato'). All this time the Baron has been conferring with the attorney about his marriage contract: their voices are now heard, with the Baron in irritable mood, and continue while the flautist plays again and the tenor sings

another verse. The bustling scene comes to an end as the Feldmarschallin waves them all off. Valzacchi and his companion Annina, however, take the opportunity to ingratiate themselves with Ochs, who asks them to find out all about 'Mariandel' for him. Ochs leaves the silver rose, brought by his servants, in the Feldmarschallin's care.

Left alone, the Feldmarschallin thinks of how the days are passing and how she must eventually be referred to as 'the old Princess' (die alte Fürstin). Octavian returns, in his own clothes, and finds her in pensive mood. She tries to explain to the passionate youth that their love can only be ephemeral. In answer to his protests, she says he must leave her now, and perhaps see her later. Reluctantly but obediently he goes. Suddenly realizing that she has dismissed him without a farewell or a last kiss, she starts up violently: she summons four footmen to call him back, but they report that he went too fast to be caught. The negro page-boy is summoned to take the silver rose to Octavian.

ACT II

Faninal is just leaving his house, about to bring Ochs to meet his daughter for the first time. Sophie's duenna, Marianne Leitmetzer, tells him that his fine new carriage is awaiting him and the Major-domo hurries him off—etiquette demands that the bride's father must not be present when the Rosenkavalier arrives as the bridegroom's messenger. Sophie prays for protection from the sin of pride, interrupted by Marianne's commentary from the window.

Calls of 'Rofrano' are heard and Marianne tells Sophie that the Rosenkavalier has arrived. His resplendent entry follows: he is clad all in white and silver, followed by his servants in white and green, some with plumes and swords. As he advances with the silver rose, he and Sophie are each taken aback by the other's grace. He presents the rose to her and the two talk for a few breathless moments.

The servants withdraw and the two, with Marianne near by, sit down to converse. They are strongly attracted—youth to youth. Then Faninal brings in Ochs. His coarsely condescending behaviour distresses Sophie (whom Marianne tries to comfort) and infuriates Octavian. Soon Ochs asks Sophie to sit on his knee and he behaves with gross familiarity. The fawning Faninal is delighted to have both a Lerchenau and a Rofrano in his house, but his daughter is sickened by the Baron's manner: she tears herself angrily away as he becomes more and more importunate. But Ochs is untroubled, reminding her gaily of an old song in waltz time, 'With me, with me' (Mit mir). Meanwhile, the attorney and his clerk have arrived, and Faninal shows Ochs into an ante-room with them to draw up the contract.

Sophie and Octavian turn to one another, she begging him for help.

Then there is a commotion among the servants (Ochs's ill-mannered men are chasing Faninal's maids); the Major-domo comes for help and Marianne goes off. Alone, Sophie and Octavian are free to express their mutual feelings and sing a tender duet, culminating in a declaration of their love.

Suddenly they are seized from behind by Valzacchi and Annina, who call Ochs. He enters, confronts the young couple and asks Sophie for an explanation ('Eh bien, Mam'zelle?'). She will not answer; but, after sarcastic remarks from Ochs, Octavian tells him that Sophie will not marry him. Ochs, brushing aside the protests, starts to lead her off; Octavian, enraged, challenges him. Still Ochs takes no notice, so Octavian insults him vigorously. Ochs whistles for his servants, but Octavian draws and for a moment they fight. Octavian's sword scratches Ochs's arm, whereupon his servants rush on Octavian and Ochs yells 'Murder! Murder!' (Mörder! Mörder!).

Now confusion reigns. Servants bustle round, tending Ochs's scratch; Sophie, Annina and Marianne express their varying concern. Faninal comes in and takes command, ordering someone to fetch a surgeon, apologizing profusely to Ochs and raging at Octavian and Sophie. He orders Octavian out and, in response to Sophie's downright refusal to marry Ochs, says he will force her to take him or she will go to a convent. Marianne takes her to her room. With more apologies to Ochs, Faninal rushes off.

Ochs, left alone with his servants and the doctor—and some wine—gradually recovers his humour, even beginning to waltz. His humour is further improved when Annina (now in Octavian's pay) comes with a letter from 'Mariandel', suggesting an assignation. He agrees with delight and sends Annina away—but without her expected tip.

ACT III

In a private room at an inn, the scene is prepared in dumb show (during the orchestral introduction) for Ochs's encounter with 'Mariandel'—in which Octavian plans to trap and expose Ochs. Octavian (ready in female clothes for his role), Valzacchi and Annina hide various assistants behind trapdoors opening into the room. When eventually all is ready, Octavian leaves the room. Dance music is heard in the distance and Ochs arrives, leading 'Mariandel'. Valzacchi greets Ochs with silent feigned respect, pointing out a bed in a recess. The landlord and waiters ask obsequiously if everything is all right, and answer a few of Ochs's queries before he sends them and Valzacchi off.

Now the *tête-à-tête* begins, 'Mariandel' speaking in raw, peasant fashion. Ochs offers 'Mariandel' wine, which she declines ('Nein, nein, nein, nein! i trink kein Wein'); she runs off as if afraid—into the recess,

where she sees the bed and feigns great wonder at who sleeps there. They sit down and Ochs is about to kiss her when he notices, with discomfiture, the striking resemblance to Octavian. A moment later a head appears through a trapdoor, to Ochs's alarm.

A servant brings in the supper (the distant music becomes clearer when the door opens). 'Mariandel', to Ochs's perturbation, is rather melancholy in mood, but giving him an occasional languid glance. Soon the faces start appearing in mysterious places at an alarming rate, unseen, apparently, by 'Mariandel', but terrifying to Ochs, who rings the bell. Annina, in disguise, suddenly rushes in, pretending to claim Ochs as her husband, and followed by the landlord and three waiters. He protests vigorously, but the landlord and waiters are scandalized, especially when four children come in, calling 'Papa, Papa, Papa!'

The Police Commissioner enters, and is suspicious of Ochs. Who, he wishes to know, is the girl? Ochs says that she is his fiancée, Sophie von Faninal. At this moment Faninal himself arrives. He identifies Ochs but is furious at the suggestion that the girl is his daughter.

Hunting around the room for his wig, which he had discarded earlier, Ochs runs into the children, who resume their cries. Sophie, whom Faninal has sent for, enters. Faninal, humiliated, faints and is carried out to the next room, with Sophie and the landlord following, and the police remove everyone except Ochs, 'Mariandel', Annina and the children.

Ochs now asks to be allowed to escort 'Mariandel' home, but she refuses to go with him. She whispers a few words to the Commissioner, then disappears into the recess. Female clothes are thrown out, one by one, to Ochs's fury. The landlord announces the Feldmarschallin, who has been summoned to Ochs's aid by one of his servants.

Octavian emerges in his proper clothes. Sophie, who has re-entered, angrily passes on to Ochs her father's instruction that he must never come near the Faninal house again. The Feldmarschallin advises Ochs to depart and assures the police officers that they can go, as what has happened was merely a prank. She asks Octavian to explain the position to Ochs, who now sees why the resemblance between Octavian and 'Mariandel' was so strong—and begins to understand rather more about the relationship between Octavian and the Feldmarschallin. Since he now realizes that the evening's events were a masquerade, Ochs hopes to resume his plans of marriage; but the Feldmarschallin says decisively that he must forget them.

The concealed trapdoor-manipulators now emerge, Annina removes her disguise and Valzacchi leads out his accomplices—all to Ochs's astonishment. They remind him ironically of what has passed. The musicians, the coachmen, the 'boots', the waiters and the landlord start pestering him and he is only too glad to get out.

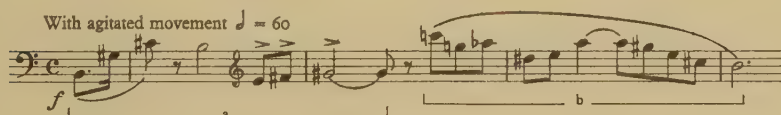
Only the Feldmarschallin, Sophie and Octavian remain. The two women each understand the claim of the other on Octavian. But the Feldmarschallin is strong enough to wipe away her tears and approach Sophie kindly. Sophie, abashed, curtsseys. Octavian is deeply moved by the Feldmarschallin's goodness but the Feldmarschallin cuts short his thanks with the words 'I know nothing . . . nothing' (Ich weiss nix, gar nix).

Now, standing apart from the lovers, the Feldmarschallin expresses the poignancy of her situation: 'I made a vow . . .' (Hab mir's gelobt): it is the beginning of a long trio for her and the lovers. The Feldmarschallin leaves; the lover's fall into each other's arms with the words ' 'Tis a dream' (Ist ein traum). The Feldmarschallin re-enters, now with Faninal, who leads her away again. The lovers end their song, embrace, and go. The room is left empty.

But Sophie has dropped her handkerchief. Who comes to fetch it? It is Mahomet, the Feldmarschallin's page-boy. With tripping footsteps he runs out again and the opera is over.

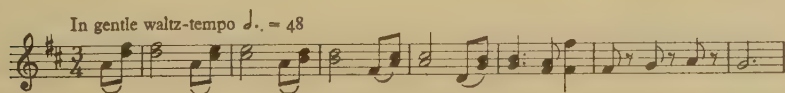
* * *

Before the curtain rises the orchestra 'tells' us of the night of love of the Feldmarschallin and Octavian. The very opening gives us two themes, representing the boy's youthful ardour (*a*) and the full, sensual passion of the mature woman (*b*):



(Ex. 1)

The unconcealed eroticism of the whole plot goes with an equally unconcealed eroticism in the music. This is linked to another major element of sensuous appeal: the use of Viennese waltz-tunes. Here the spirit of Johann Strauss was taken by his namesake to enliven (with triumphant anachronism) a scene set in Vienna a hundred years before Johann Strauss's day. There are several of these waltzes in *Der Rosenkavalier*, which have been made into various suites for concert-hall use. The most famous is what might be called Ochs's theme-song: he first sings it when trying to fondle Sophie in Faninal's house. We give its orchestral version:



(Ex. 2)

Before this, Octavian has presented the silver rose to the accompaniment of a strange chord-sequence in an orchestration that itself sounds 'silvery' (flutes, harps, solo violins, celesta). We quote it (*a* below) not at its first appearance but as Strauss brings it back—with an utter simplicity of telling effect—when the young lovers are finally each other's, and are singing their duet just before the end of the opera. Sophie's words may be translated: 'It is a dream, it cannot be true that we two are together.'

Peacefully moving ♩ = 69 [Harp, celesta] 8va

SOPHIE, OCTAVIAN
dolcissimo possibile, dreamily
p

[SOPHIE'S WORDS] Ist ein Traum, kann nicht wirklich sein

Dass wir zwei bei einander sein

(Ex. 3)

ARIADNE AUF NAXOS

(Ariadne on Naxos)

Libretto by Hugo von Hofmannsthal

Original version first performed: Stuttgart, 1912

Revised version first performed: Vienna, 1916

Revised version: Prologue and One Act

Cast in order of singing:

The Major-domo
The Music Master
A lackey
An officer
The Composer

speaking part
baritone
bass
tenor
soprano

The Tenor (later Bacchus)		<i>tenor</i>
A wig-maker		<i>bass</i>
Zerbinetta, an actress		<i>soprano</i>
The Dancing Master		<i>tenor</i>
The Prima Donna (later Ariadne)		<i>soprano</i>
Naiad	} three nymphs	{ <i>soprano</i>
Dryad		
Echo		
Harlequin	} characters in the harlequinade	{ <i>soprano</i>
Brighella		
Truffaldino		
Scaramuccio		
		<i>baritone</i>
		<i>tenor</i>
		<i>bass</i>
		<i>tenor</i>

The scene is laid in Vienna in the early eighteenth century

In *Ariadne on Naxos* we see a curious marriage between Strauss's fondness (like Wagner's) for mythological or other ancient stories and his leaning to realistic comedy. *Ariadne on Naxos* was at first designed as a one-act opera, to be performed as the divertissement in a condensed version of Molière's comedy *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* (for which Strauss also provided incidental music). In this form it was not particularly successful; moreover, the difficulty of providing separate companies of actors and singers made it prohibitive for most theatres. So Strauss and his librettist wrote a musical prologue to replace the play. The original 'opera' was retained, in slightly revised form; but now, instead of being offered as M. Jourdain's entertainment for his dinner guests, it is offered by a Viennese *nouveau riche* to his.

It is in the revised form—to which the following synopsis adheres—that the work is generally given today. The prologue introduces the supposed artists who are to perform the entertainment for the wealthy patron's guests; it also introduces the particularly sympathetic figure of the Composer himself (a soprano role, representing a youth). To fit in with its eighteenth-century conception and inspiration, *Ariadne* is scored for a far smaller orchestra than Strauss's other operas. In it the charm of a mock-old-fashioned harlequinade is set beside a virtuoso handling of three types of soprano: coloratura (Zerbinetta), lyric (Composer) and dramatic (Ariadne).

PROLOGUE

Backstage in the private theatre of a Viennese mansion, the Music Master agitatedly approaches the Major-domo, complaining that the serious opera (*Ariadne on Naxos*) by his pupil the Composer, to be given that evening, will be spoilt if followed, as is proposed, by a comic opera or harlequinade.

The Major-domo tells him that the plans will not be changed, and that the opera will need to be shortened; he goes off, and the Music Master follows.

A lackey brings in an officer, who goes into the room where Zerbinetta, the actress of the harlequinade, is dressing. The Composer enters, anxious about rehearsing his opera. He is irritated when the lackey goes off and leaves him; but then a melody occurs to him and he tries to write it down. One of the dressing-room doors suddenly flies open and the Tenor angrily ejects a wig-maker; then Zerbinetta comes out of her room with the officer, and is joined by the Dancing Master; and then the Prima Donna comes out of hers, with the Music Master. The Music Master tells the Composer, who has noticed—and been attracted by—Zerbinetta, of the plans for the evening. The Composer is outraged at the demands made on him, but recovers as another ‘inspiration’ comes to him. Zerbinetta, her troupe around her, talks with the Dancing Master and finishes her make-up; meanwhile, the Prima Donna makes slighting remarks about the comedians.

The Major-domo returns and creates further consternation by announcing that, on his master’s orders, the two entertainments are to be given simultaneously. The Composer is horrified, but the Dancing Master and the Music Master agree that a compromise must be managed. Both the Prima Donna and the Tenor demand that any necessary cuts shall be in the other’s part—on which both are reassured (separately) by the Music Master.

The story of Ariadne is explained to Zerbinetta, who, not believing in a woman who truly longs for death when deserted by a lover, treats it somewhat cynically when telling it to her troupe. The Composer, idealistically, tries to explain it to Zerbinetta, and as they talk he is strongly drawn to her. She goes off; then the Prima Donna returns and, to the Music Master, renews her protests at having to appear alongside a comic troupe. The Composer, seeing the harlequinade players, is once more aghast at the pollution of his art, and rushes off in despair.

OPERA

On a stage within the stage, the scene is set for the opera of *Ariadne*—a seashore, with a cave, and wings made from rocks and trees. The three nymphs (Naiad, Dryad and Echo) are commenting on Ariadne’s sadness, while she reclines on the shore asleep. She awakes, recalling her love for Theseus: ‘How beauteous once’ (Ein schönes war).¹ From the wings, Harlequin, Zerbinetta and the other comedians comment; Ariadne continues as if she has not heard them. Soon the comedians, uncomprehending, give up; Ariadne, rising, sings to herself of the happy prospect of death: ‘There is a land’ (Es gibt ein Reich).

¹ English version by Alfred Kalisch (Boosey & Hawkes).

The comedians return, to try to enliven Ariadne with singing and dancing: 'This lady is too much inclined' (Die Dame gibt mit trübem Sinn'). Zerbinetta enters, sends them away and approaches Ariadne: 'Most gracious sovereign lady' (Grossmächtige Prinzessin). She tries to talk to her as woman to woman; Ariadne pointedly ignores her and retires into the cave, but Zerbinetta continues at some length her attempt to console her, relating the story of her own love-life.

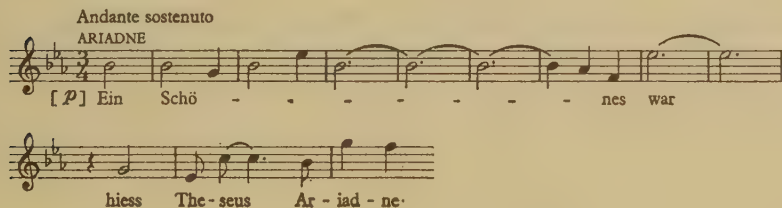
Harlequin enters and attempts to make love to Zerbinetta. She resists him coquettishly. The other three enter, also in pursuit of her, while she dances around them: soon she and Harlequin, who has remained in the background, go off together, to the annoyance of the others.

As they go, the three nymphs return, commenting on what they have just seen—a young god approaching the island. It is Bacchus. He enters, singing of his escape from the enchantress Circe (which the nymphs had recalled). Ariadne comes from the cave happily: she believes her visitor to be Hermes, the messenger of death, and welcomes him.

The nymphs go off, leaving Bacchus and Ariadne alone. He is entranced by her beauty; as they sing together, their feelings warm into love. He eventually kisses her and she believes she is dying. She revives, and with a sense of wonderment they move off together into the cave. As their loving voices are heard, the nymphs comment, and Zerbinetta enters to remark characteristically on the inevitability of the outcome.

* * *

Ariadne is an opera full of contrasts. Most of Strauss's operas are much concerned with the essential nature of Woman: here two different feminine types (or different aspects of femininity) are powerfully contrasted by musical means. This is how the 'faithful-unto-death' Ariadne recalls her happiness with Theseus:



(Ex. 1)

Compare this with the music allocated to the fickle, light-hearted Zerbinetta—in perhaps the most brilliant and intensely difficult coloratura aria in the entire repertory—as she sings of her past love affairs. She then breaks into a cheerful rondo:

Allegro scherzando
ZERBINETTA

f So war es mit Pa - glia - zzo und Mez-ze - tin! Dann war es Ca -
vi - - cchio, dann Bu - ra - tin, dann Pas-qua - riel - - lo!

Allegro

[*f*] Als ein Gott kam je - der ge - gan - gen und sein
Schritt schon mach - te mich stumm,

(Ex. 2)

Note the more 'serious' transformation of Zerbinetta's rondo theme as, in the opera's closing pages, she applies the same idea to Ariadne ('When a new god comes to woo us, Captive are we, helpless, dumb'):

ZERBINETTA
Moderato

[*p*] Kommt der neu - e Gott ge - gan - gen hin - ge - ge - ben
sind wir stumm stumm

(Ex. 3)

The other marked contrast is between what one might call the 'satellites' of the two women. Ariadne's are the three nymphs, whose trios are like those of Wagner's Rhinemaidens, but lighter, more translucent, in texture (Echo, by the way, is often an echo in fact as well as name). Zerbinetta's—the four men of the harlequinade—are on quite another level: indulging in all kinds of frivolous antics and singing in lively, dancing rhythms.

XI

ALBAN BERG

(1885-1935)

THE distance between the first performances of Richard Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos* and Alban Berg's *Wozzeck* is a mere twelve years—but these twelve years include those of the First World War, and for most music-lovers the gap between the two works is the gap separating 'old' from 'modern' music. Of all the pioneers and innovators of modernism in music, the most influential has proved to be the Viennese Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951), of whom Berg was a disciple.

Schoenberg himself composed four operatic works: *Erwartung* (Expectation), composed in 1909 though not performed until 1924; *Die glückliche Hand* (The Lucky Hand), composed 1910-13; *Von Heute auf Morgen* (From Today till Tomorrow), 1930; and *Moses and Aaron*, which was only partially completed. Of the first three, all short, *Erwartung* is the best known; it is for one character only. The full-length *Moses and Aaron* was (despite its incomplete nature) brought to the stage in 1957 and has aroused great interest.

But the first major operatic success of the 'Schoenberg school' was won by Berg's *Wozzeck*. It is, with the exception of an orchestral interlude, atonal (keyless)—but not twelve-note, i.e., not in the system or order which Schoenberg evolved within atonality to replace the lost order of key. Berg's later opera, *Lulu* (unfinished, performed in 1937 after the composer's death), is written in the twelve-note technique. The title-role of *Lulu* is that of a woman who incarnates sexual pleasure and, after becoming the wife and mistress of several men, ends up as one of Jack the Ripper's victims in London.

WOZZECK

Libretto by the composer, after Georg Büchner

First performed: Berlin, 1925

Three Acts

Cast in order of singing:

The Captain	<i>tenor</i>
Wozzeck, a soldier, batman to the Captain	<i>baritone</i>
Andres, another soldier, his friend	<i>tenor</i>
Marie, a woman living with Wozzeck	<i>soprano</i>
Margret, Marie's neighbour	<i>contralto</i>
The Doctor	<i>bass</i>
The Drum-major	<i>tenor</i>
Two apprentices	<i>baritone (or tenor) and bass</i>
An idiot	<i>tenor</i>
Marie's and Wozzeck's child	<i>treble</i>

Chorus of soldiers, apprentices, servants and children

The scene is laid in a German town in the early nineteenth century

In its depiction of the agony of the unbalanced, persecuted individual at the hands of unfeeling society, *Wozzeck* seems so modern that it is hard to realize that it is based on a play written before Victoria came to the throne. This play was *Woyzeck* (that was the original spelling), left unfinished by its German author, Georg Büchner, who died in 1837 at the age of twenty-three.

Wozzeck is a simple soldier, distinguished neither by intelligence nor any other special gift: an anti-hero, in fact. Yet he wins our sympathy—ill-treated as he is by his superiors, deceived by the woman with whom he lives. Even this woman, however, has her glimpse of redemption. There is a pathos which they themselves cannot express articulately, but it is a pathos which becomes intensely moving in the theatre. Berg's music (orchestral as well as vocal) seems to convey the fears and fantasies of Wozzeck's mind as well as the frustrations of his material existence.

ACT I

Scene 1. The Captain is being shaved by the agitated, nervous Wozzeck, his batman. He teases Wozzeck, reproaching him for having a child out of wedlock. Wozzeck attempts to justify himself: 'We poor people' (*Wir arme Leut*)¹ 'cannot afford the morality of the rich.'

Scene 2. Wozzeck and his friend Andres are cutting wood in a field. Andres is singing gaily while Wozzeck, confused in his mind, believes the place to be haunted and sees strange visions.

Scene 3. Marie is minding her small child and talking through the window of her room with a neighbour, Margret. As a military passes band by, Marie waves to the Drum-major. Margret comments on Marie's friendliness with men and the two quarrel. Marie sings her child a lullaby:

¹ English version by Eric Blackall and Vida Harford (Universal).

'Maiden, what song shall you sing?' (Mädel, was fangst Du jetzt an?) The child falls asleep. Soon there is a knock at the window. Wozzeck, still agitated, looks in, talks for a moment with Marie, and rushes off again. Soon after, the distressed Marie goes out.

Scene 4. In his study, the Doctor talks to Wozzeck, who has consented for a small extra wage to be subjected to the Doctor's medical experiments. The Doctor hectors him, then listens to Wozzeck's descriptions of his strange world—he hopes to become famous through the medical discoveries arising from his studies of Wozzeck.

Scene 5. Outside her house, Marie talks with the handsome, bearded Drum-major and admires his physique. He is strongly attracted by her and tries to embrace her: at first she resists, then, with a shrug, she leads him indoors.

ACT II

Scene 1. In her room, Marie is impatiently trying to get her child to sleep, intermittently admiring herself (wearing a pair of gold earrings) in a broken mirror. Wozzeck enters and is suspicious on seeing the earrings. He looks at the sleeping child, gives Marie some money which he has received from the Captain and the Doctor, and goes off, leaving her in remorse over her infidelity.

Scene 2. In the street, the Captain catches up with the Doctor, who is in a hurry; the Doctor makes the Captain uneasy by talking about disease and death. They stop Wozzeck as he passes and, with allusions to soldiers wearing beards, tease him cruelly about the Drum-major. He goes off distracted, soon followed by the Captain and the Doctor.

Scene 3. In front of her house again, Marie greets Wozzeck. He questions her and reproaches her angrily for her behaviour with the Drum-major. Before she goes off, she says 'Better a knife-blade in my heart than lay a hand on me' (Lieber ein Messer in der Leib, als eine Hand auf mich).

Scene 4. Soldiers, girls and apprentices are drinking and dancing in a tavern to the music of a band. Two drunken apprentices sing of brandy. Wozzeck enters and is enraged to see Marie and the Drum-major among the dancers; he is about to rush at them when the dance ends and the soldiers and apprentices, led by Andres, sing a hunting song: 'A hunter from the south' (Ein Jäger aus der Pfalz). Andres and Wozzeck talk for a moment, then one of the drunken apprentices climbs on to a table and delivers a rambling sermon. An idiot approaches Wozzeck and talks to him of blood; the thought of blood preys on Wozzeck's mind as the dancing is resumed.

Scene 5. Soldiers are asleep in the barrack-room. Wozzeck, still tortured by thoughts of the dance-hall, talks to the half-sleeping Andres. The Drum-major, drunk, enters noisily, boasting of his possession of a woman

and hinting at her identity. He torments Wozzeck and offers him brandy: in reply Wozzeck merely whistles. Angrily, the Drum-major seizes him and they fight, the Drum-major completing his humiliation by pushing him to the floor and beating his face.

The Drum-major goes and the disturbed soldiers settle themselves again, Wozzeck sitting on his bed and staring before him.

ACT III

Scene 1. Marie, alone with her child in her room, reads her Bible by candlelight. She is in penitent mood and prays for mercy.

Scene 2. At dusk, Wozzeck and Marie are walking by a pool. She is nervous and wishes to go home, but he insists on their sitting down. He recalls their first meeting and kisses her; then he draws his knife and cuts her throat.

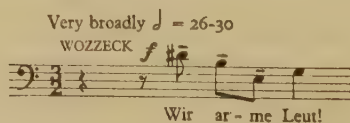
Scene 3. Apprentices and girls are dancing a polka in a tavern. Wozzeck watches them. He sings raucously and calls Margret over, starting to make love to her. Then he asks her to sing, which she does, accompanied by an out-of-tune piano: 'To Swabia' (In's Schwabenland). She notices a dark-red stain on his right hand. He says that he had cut his arm; but the crowd gathers round him and he rushes off.

Scene 4. Back by the pool. Wozzeck is searching for the knife with which he killed Marie. He comes upon her corpse. Finding the knife, he throws it in the pool; and as the blood-red moon shows through the clouds, wades in after it as if to wash off his own blood. He drowns. Arriving at that moment, the Captain and the Doctor pause, thinking that they heard something. Then the Captain, disturbed by the uncanny atmosphere, drags the Doctor off.

Scene 5. In front of Marie's house a crowd of children, among them Marie's, is playing. News comes of the discovery of Marie's body and they hurry off to see it, one of them telling Marie's child that his mother is dead. He goes on riding his hobby-horse for a while, then, finding himself alone, runs off after the others.

* * *

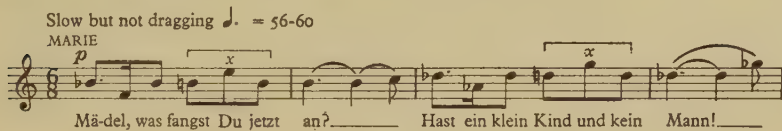
'We poor people': the basic dramatic motive of the opera is musically characterized by Wozzeck in the opening scene.



(Ex. 1)

Certain parts of the opera also employ a device called 'Speech-song' (*Sprechgesang*) which Schoenberg devised. In it the singer does not sustain the pitch of the note indicated but just touches it: the effect is something of a compromise between speech and song. This is only one of the ways in which Berg develops a peculiarly intense expression for the words, away from the older conventions of what is beautiful and regular in music.

On occasion Berg comes close to a 'popular' musical style (lullaby, military march, hunting song) but deliberately distorts the kind of melody we should expect. Thus Marie, singing to her child in Act I ('Maiden, what song shall you sing?'), has the following melody:



(Ex. 2)

Here is the typical rocking of the traditional lullaby, and indeed a typical lullaby melody—except for the violent distortion induced by the out-of-key notes in the phrases marked 'x'.

A similar kind of distorted reality is achieved by the tavern orchestra in Act II and the out-of-tune piano in Act III. But it is not only in the unusual instruments required here that Berg's use of the orchestra is original and impressive. Notable are the orchestral *crescendo* on the single note B, after Marie's murder—an overwhelming effect in the theatre—and the interlude between the two final scenes of the opera. It is this interlude (not atonal, but in the key of D minor) which seems to sum up Wozzeck's tragedy and to speak directly from composer to audience. The chorus is also sometimes used 'orchestrally'—that is, for its power of sheer tone-colour and atmosphere, notably in the 'snoring' heard when Wozzeck returns to his barrack-room in Act II.

The scenes are composed by Berg in what are usually considered instrumental forms—fugue, variations, etc.—though it is the dramatic, not the formal, development which we sense in the theatre.

IGOR STRAVINSKY

(born 1882)

BORN a Russian, afterwards taking French and then American nationality, Igor Stravinsky has had a musical career of extraordinary variety and extraordinary success. In the 1950s he began writing serial and then strict twelve-note music—to which he had been attracted by the work not of Schoenberg but of Schoenberg's disciple, Anton Webern (1883–1945). But Stravinsky's operas date from before this 'conversion'.

The Nightingale (words in Russian by the composer and S. N. Mitusov, but first produced in France, and in French, in 1914) has been less widely heard than *Oedipus Rex* (1927) and *The Rake's Progress* (1951). The last of these has an English text by W. H. Auden and Chester Kallman, based on Hogarth's pictures: there is a back-to-Mozart, back-to-Bellini stylization about the music, at the end of which (as in *Don Giovanni*) the characters turn to the audience and warn them to draw a moral lesson from the tale.

Oedipus Rex is chosen for detailed comment here because its break with tradition is particularly striking (and was even more so in the 1920s). Stravinsky's only other opera is the half-hour comedy *Mavra* (Russian text by Boris Kochno, first given in 1922 in French); *The Soldier's Tale* (1918) uses speech, dance and instrumental music but no singing, and is not an opera.

OEDIPUS REX

(King Oedipus)

Libretto by Jean Cocteau (after Sophocles),

translated into Latin by J. Daniélou

First performed: Paris, 1927

Two Acts

Cast in order of singing:

Oedipus, King of Thebes

Creon, Jocasta's brother

Tiresias, a seer

Jocasta, Oedipus's wife

tenor

bass-baritone

bass

mezzo-soprano

A messenger

bass-baritone

A shepherd

tenor

[A narrator also takes part, telling the story as it proceeds.

Points at which he intervenes are indicated in the synopsis.]

Chorus of men of Thebes

The scene is laid in Thebes in classical times

Significantly, Stravinsky chose to set a version of Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex* not in the author's own Greek nor the composer's own Russian nor in the language of modern France (where the work was to be staged) but in Latin—a language which Stravinsky described as 'a medium not dead, but turned to stone, and so monumentalized as to have become immune from all risks of vulgarization'. The libretto was therefore written in French (by Cocteau) and translated into Latin. A narrator is required to interrupt the action by telling the story in the audience's own language.

The work is described as an 'opera-oratorio', and the novelty of the form was doubtless a deliberate challenge to tradition and especially to the idea that opera should be realistic. The characters of *Oedipus Rex* are costumed, but (according to the original scheme) restricted in their movements: Oedipus, Creon and Jocasta use masks and move only their arms and heads.

It is fitting to this conception that the music, too, should seem severe and monumental. But such is the skill of the music—not only in itself but in the way its variety of mood and pace reflect the drama—that the piece comes over in the theatre with impressive power.

ACT I

[Narration]

King Oedipus is begged by the people of Thebes to save them from the plague which is destroying the city. He promises to do so, saying that he has sent Creon, his wife's brother, to ask the oracle of Apollo what is to be done. Creon appears and is greeted by the people.

[Narration]

Creon tells Oedipus and the people the god's answer: the Thebans must discover the murderer of the previous king, Laius; he must be driven out of the city, for it is he who is causing the city's misery. Oedipus boasts to the people that he will find the guilty man.

[Narration]

The chorus pray that Oedipus will succeed. They greet the seer Tiresias, whom Oedipus decides to consult; but Tiresias declines to speak, asking not to be compelled to do so. Oedipus, made suspicious by his silence, accuses him of being the murderer himself. In indignation, Tiresias

resolves to speak, and he tells Oedipus what the god has said: 'The king's murderer is a king' (*Regis est rex peremptor*). Oedipus, believing Tiresias to be in league with Creon in a plot against himself, turns angrily on him. Then the Queen, Jocasta, appears, to be greeted by the people in a jubilant chorus.

ACT II

[Narration]

The chorus repeat their greeting to Jocasta. She rebukes the princes for quarrelling in the plague-ridden city. She tells Oedipus not to trust oracles ('*Ne probentur oracula*'): she knows that they can lie—for they predicted that her son would kill her husband, the previous king, whereas he was in fact murdered by a thief at a meeting of three roads (the chorus echo the word '*trivium*').

Oedipus becomes uneasy: he remembers killing an old man once at a meeting of three roads. (He believes, however, that he is the son of the Corinthian king, Polybus; he had left Corinth as it was predicted that he would kill his father and marry his mother.) In a long duet, Jocasta tries to lead him away, but he is bent on discovering the truth and sends for the shepherd who witnessed his crime.

[Narration]

The chorus announce the arrival of a messenger, who bears news of the death of Polybus. He relates that Polybus was not Oedipus's true father; he, the messenger, had brought Oedipus, exposed on a mountainside in his infancy, to Polybus. The truth seems clear, but the people still hope that some miraculous explanation will come to light. The shepherd then comes forward and tells how the infant son of Laius and Jocasta had been abandoned in this way on a mountainside.

Jocasta has departed; Oedipus, not comprehending the truth, at first believes she does not wish to hear of his humble ancestry. But at last he realizes the terrible facts: he is the son of Jocasta, and has murdered his true father, Laius, and married his mother. He leaves.

[Narration]

The messenger returns with news of the death of Jocasta: 'Dead is the sacred head of Jocasta' (*Divum Jocastae caput mortuum*). The people tell of how Jocasta hanged herself and of how Oedipus cut her down, then put out his eyes with her brooch. He reappears, to their horror; but when they see their king's blind, mutilated face their horror turns to pity as they bid him farewell.

* * *

Though the music is both hard in texture and apparently rigid in shape (which is what we mean by the 'monumental' aspect of Stravinsky's work

in this vein) it is nevertheless varied not only between characters but even within their utterances. Oedipus, at the beginning, is vain and self-confident: his promise to deliver his people ('Ego vos liberabo') is uttered with flaunting coloratura. But when he discovers the terrible truth about himself, he is reduced to:

[Moderato] ♩ = 63
OEDIPUS
p
Lux fac - ta est!

(Ex. I)

These words ('Light has come!') bear their own terrible irony: in a few minutes we shall hear that Oedipus has put out his eyes.

Jocasta's earlier utterance in distrust of oracles shows Stravinsky's characteristic rough-riding over the natural rhythms of language to create musical and dramatic tension:

Vivo $\text{♩} = 84$
JOCASTA

ben articolato

marcato in p O-ra-cu-la, o-ra-cu-la, — men-ti-ta sunt o-ra-cu-la.

(Ex. 2)

BENJAMIN BRITTEN

(born 1913)

FROM Stravinsky we pass to one of the many composers who has gained considerably from his work as a harmonic innovator: Benjamin Britten, the leading British composer of today. But Stravinsky's highly individual approach to the theatre contributed nothing to *Peter Grimes*, with which Britten began his conquering operatic career in 1945. The astonishing thing about Britten as an opera composer is, indeed, the degree to which he is self-made—with a great versatility of musical resources, with natural debts to some composers but chains to none, and showing very little connection with previous English opera.

At this point we may look back over what might be justly called the pre-Britten century in English opera. Its two considerable international successes were *The Bohemian Girl* (1843) by Michael William Balfe (1808–70) and *The Mikado* (1881) by Arthur Sullivan (1842–1900). But Sullivan failed with his one serious opera, *Ivanhoe* (1891), and of the composers coming after him only a few wrote works to which much interest attaches today, even in Britain. It is perhaps not invidious to pick out *A Village Romeo and Juliet* (originally in German, 1907) by Frederick Delius (1862–1934), *The Boatswain's Mate* (1916) by Ethel Smyth (1858–1934) and *Sāvitri* (1916), on an Indian legend, by Gustav Holst (1874–1934).

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958), like his teacher, Charles Villiers Stanford (1852–1924), wrote operas persistently but not very successfully: perhaps the best is *Riders to the Sea* (1937). Another Stanford pupil, Arthur Benjamin (1893–1960), showed a surer theatrical flair in *Prima Donna* (composed 1934, performed 1949) and *A Tale of Two Cities* (radio 1953, staged 1957). Composers who are older than Britten, but who began their operatic career after he did, include William Walton (born 1902) with *Troilus and Cressida* (1954); Michael Tippett (born 1905) with *The Midsummer Marriage* (1955) and *King Priam* (1962); and Lennox Berkeley (born 1903, see below).

Britten's own operas may be divided into three categories. Full-scale operas for large theatres: *Peter Grimes* (1945), *Billy Budd* (1951) and *Gloriana* (1953). Chamber operas (i.e. using chamber orchestra): *The Rape of Lucretia* (1946), *Albert Herring* (1947), *The Turn of the Screw* (1953) and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1960, later rescored for full orchestra).

Works not primarily for the opera-house at all: *Let's Make an Opera!* (1949; for children) and *Noye's Fludde* (1958; for church performance). For the second and third categories Britten has employed his own English Opera Group, with its chamber-orchestra basis, which has also performed Britten's own very free treatment of *The Beggar's Opera* (1948; see also page 7), and has introduced one notable non-Britten work: Lennox Berkeley's *A Dinner Engagement* (1954).

For the 1964 Aldeburgh Festival Britten wrote a chamber opera based on a Japanese play and entitled *Curlew River*.

PETER GRIMES

Libretto by Montagu Slater, after George Crabbe

First performed: London, 1945

Prologue and Three Acts

Cast in order of singing:

Hobson, a carrier and village constable	bass
Swallow, a lawyer and coroner of the Borough	bass
Peter Grimes, a fisherman	tenor
Mrs Sedley, a rentier widow of an East India Company's factor	mezzo-soprano
Ellen Orford, a widow, schoolmistress of the Borough	soprano
Auntie, landlady of the Boar Inn	contralto
Bob Boles, a fisherman and Methodist	tenor
Balstrode, a retired merchant skipper	baritone
Two nieces, 'main attractions' of the Boar	sopranos
Ned Keene, apothecary and quack	baritone
The Rev. Horace Adams, the Rector	tenor
[The part of John, Grimes's new apprentice, is silent.]	

Chorus of townspeople and fisherfolk

The scene is laid in the Borough, a small fishing town on the East Coast of England, about 1830

Like *Wozzeck*, *Peter Grimes* has a persecuted misfit for its protagonist—a characteristically twentieth-century, post-Freudian operatic choice, we may think. Thus, beyond the multiplicity of individual tensions, the opera presents a conflict between the lone fisherman and the community in which he works. The moral scales are not, as usual in opera, tilted conveniently in the hero's favour. When the villagers recoil from Grimes's cruelty, we do so too; but such is the illumination afforded by the music

that we sympathize with him as well. We feel (to quote the libretto itself) 'the pity and the truth'.

'The Borough', the setting for this opera (and for Crabbe's poem of 1810 on which it is based), is a thinly disguised form of Aldeburgh, the Suffolk fishing village where Britten has made his home. 'I am native, rooted here', declares Grimes, and we may perhaps imagine the composer—born not far away, at Lowestoft—speaking through him.

PROLOGUE

The villagers are assembled in the Borough's Moot Hall for an inquest on Peter Grimes's apprentice, who has died at sea. Hobson calls Peter Grimes, who is questioned by Swallow, acting as coroner. Grimes explains the circumstances of the death and of his return with the boy's body (there is a brief intervention from Mrs. Sedley, one of the leading gossips, and the mutterings of the villagers are heard, silenced by Hobson). Swallow advises Grimes to manage without a boy apprentice in future and returns a verdict that death was due to accidental circumstances. Grimes, suspected of treating the boy brutally, asks to be confronted by his accusers, but Hobson clears the court and Grimes is left alone with the schoolmistress, Ellen Orford, who gently tries to console him.

ACT I

As dawn rises, the Borough's men and women set to work preparing the nets. A fisherman calls to Auntie, landlady of the Boar, who beckons some of them to the inn despite the protestations of Bob Boles, a Methodist. The retired skipper, Balstrode, comments on the approach of a storm. The Rector and Mrs. Sedley pass, greeted by Auntie's two nieces, to whom the apothecary Keene calls out jocularly. Swallow, too, passes by.

From a distance, Grimes's voice is heard asking for help. At first nobody moves, but then Keene and Balstrode haul at the capstan for him while Boles talks to Auntie of Grimes's sinfulness. Keene tells Grimes that he has obtained an apprentice for him, and asks Hobson to fetch the boy in his cart. Hobson at first refuses, to the approval of the people assembled, but when Ellen Orford offers to look after the boy on the journey he agrees, and they depart. After asking Keene for a supply of the laudanum to which she is addicted, Mrs. Sedley goes off.

Balstrode draws attention to the gathering storm, and he, Keene, Auntie, the nieces, Boles and the chorus sing of its approach and the rising of the tide. The fisherfolk fasten their boats and go into the Boar for shelter, leaving Balstrode and Grimes alone. Balstrode advises Grimes to leave the Borough, but despite the malice of the people Grimes finds the ties too strong. As the winds become fiercer, he describes to Balstrode the scene of the boy's death, and goes on to tell of his dreams of becoming

wealthy, marrying Ellen and winning the Borough's respect. Balstrode leaves Grimes as the storm breaks.

The scene changes to the interior of the Boar. Mrs. Sedley is there, waiting for Keene. Balstrode, then Boles and other fishermen arrive, struggling with the door in the fierce wind as they enter. The nieces come down, frightened, from their bedroom. More people enter with news of the storm's ravages. Boles, unaccustomed to drink, becomes tipsy; he behaves importunately to one of the nieces and is dealt with by Balstrode.

Keene and others come in (Keene mentioning a landslide on the cliff near Grimes's hut), soon followed by Grimes. Mrs. Sedley faints and the others mutter 'Talk of the devil', in a general unease. To the puzzlement of the others, Grimes philosophizes: 'Now the Great Bear and Pleiades where earth moves are drawing up the clouds of human grief.' To break the tension Balstrode calls for a song. Keene obliges, and soon all are singing a round, 'Old Joe has gone fishing.' Its liveliness is shattered when Ellen, Hobson and the new apprentice enter, soaked and storm-beaten. Auntie tries to make them warm and comfortable, but Grimes is in a hurry to be off. Ellen hands the boy over and, to the disapproval of all but her, Grimes takes him off into the howling storm.

ACT II

It is Sunday morning. Villagers are moving towards the church as the bell sounds, and Ellen comes in with the boy. She decides to stay on the beach rather than go to church, and sits knitting and talking to the boy as the voices of the congregation and the Rector are heard from the church. She suddenly sees that the boy's clothing is torn and that his neck is bruised. The suspicion that Grimes is ill-treating the boy is not lost on Mrs. Sedley, who is passing.

Grimes enters excitedly. He has seen a large shoal and wants the apprentice to come, despite Ellen's reminder that it is the boy's day of rest. She reproaches Grimes, wondering whether they were right to plan a future together. Grimes cannot suppress his fury; he strikes her and goes off with the boy, seen by Auntie, Keene and Boles. Keene observes that 'Grimes is at his exercise', and as the people leave the church (among them Balstrode, who tries to calm the angry Boles and Mrs. Sedley) they join in the angry buzz of conversation about Grimes 'at his exercise'. Swallow, the Rector and others join in. Eventually Boles starts haranguing the crowd against the apprentice system, against Grimes and against Ellen ('She helped him in his cruel games').

Ellen explains that she and Grimes planned to care for the boy's welfare, but the crowd is in a jeering and angry mood and Auntie leads Ellen off. The Rector proposes a deputation of the village men to Grimes's hut, to find out the truth about Grimes's suspected cruelties once and for

all. Led by Hobson, beating his drum, and watched by the women, they go off. Ellen, Auntie and the nieces ponder upon the bitterness of woman's lot.

The scene changes to Grimes's hut. Grimes enters, pushing the boy before him; he throws the boy's sea clothes to him and shouts at the sobbing lad to prepare himself quickly. Seeing the sea seething with fish, he again dreams of a less troubled future with Ellen, then recalls the last apprentice. Sounds of the approaching procession are heard; realizing that the villagers are coming, he thinks the boy has been talking and becomes angry, telling him to hurry and get ready to go down by the cliff. Grimes warns his apprentice to take care. The boy leaves first: he slips and, screaming, falls down the cliff to his death. Grimes goes out.

The villagers, led by the Rector, Swallow and Keene, enter the hut. They are surprised to find it empty and well-kept; Swallow says that there seems no cause for alarm, and that they should no longer interfere. They all go, except Balstrode, who looks around the hut, sees the precipice outside, and follows the route Grimes took down the cliff.

ACT III

From the beach, in the evening, the distant sound of a barn dance is heard from the Moot Hall. Swallow comes out of the hall, tipsily bantering with the two nieces. Keene follows a little later and is accosted by Mrs. Sedley: she tells him that Grimes and his apprentice have not been seen for two days and she feels sure Grimes has killed the boy. He takes little notice and soon eludes her. The Rector and others come out of the Moot Hall—the time has arrived for the older people to leave the festivities and go home to bed.

Mrs. Sedley broods on the situation, concealing herself when Ellen and Balstrode pass by. They are talking of Grimes: his boat is in but they have not seen him, though they have found the boy's embroidered jersey by the sea. They go off, full of foreboding, hoping they can help Grimes.

As they disappear, Mrs. Sedley runs off to the Boar, asking for Swallow. Auntie tries to send her away but Swallow hears the commotion and comes out. Mrs. Sedley tells him that Grimes is back and he promptly orders Hobson, as village constable, to organize a search for him. The people, angry and suspicious, assemble, crying 'Peter Grimes! Peter Grimes!'

Some hours later, Grimes enters, weary and half-demented. There is a thick fog: in the distance the cries of the villagers are still audible. Grimes's thoughts are a jumble as he recalls the fate of the apprentices (he repeats the Coroner's verdict of 'Accidental circumstances') and other events which have driven him to his present crisis. The voices grow nearer. Ellen and Balstrode arrive. She wants to lead Grimes home, but

For a moment the beach is deserted. Then, as another day dawns, the people come out to start their work. Swallow reports to some fishermen that a boat has been seen sinking out at sea beyond the reach of help. The other villagers come out too. They sing of the inexorable tides, for the life of the Borough in joy and sorrow is governed by the sea.

✻ ✻ ✻

There is, however, no overture, and almost as soon as the curtain rises Britten begins to differentiate Grimes from his fellow villagers. Swallow reads out the formula for taking the oath ('I swear by Almighty God', etc.) punctuated by heavy *staccato* brass discords; Grimes not only alters the rhythm but also sings it more slowly, refusing to rattle it off emptily, and is accompanied by sustained strings.

Peter's only friend in the court-room is Ellen Orford; they are finally left alone together and at the end of their duet, singing unaccompanied and in unison, they have a phrase marked by a distinctive upward leap, which is a kind of motive representing Peter's striving for a happier life and also representing the compassion Ellen offers:

My voice out of the pain is like a hand that you can feel

(Ex. 1)

The chorus in the role of 'the people' plays a major part in the opera, at two points joining in with the soloists in big, cumulative set-pieces: the round 'Old Joe has gone fishing' (Act I) and the derisive 'Grimes is at his exercise!'—first heard as:

Allegretto
AUNTIE

Grimes is at his ex-er-cise!

KEENE
p

Grimes is at his ex-er-cise!

(upper parts omitted)

Orch. *pp*

(Ex. 2)

Note the 'chiming-in' of the second voice as if gossip were spreading. This musical phrase is actually sung first of all to different words by Grimes himself ('God have mercy upon me') and is afterwards carried over into the Passacaglia which joins Interlude 4 as the men are marching towards Grimes's hut: it may be called a 'persecution' theme.

The chorus also utters the menacing cries of 'Peter Grimes! Peter Grimes!' which are still heard, off-stage, in the final scene as Grimes recalls the past—and, musically, recalls the previous music of the opera. We give the passage where he quotes his own philosophizing (from Act I, in the inn) and then quotes the round that was also sung in the inn; in between comes the distant shout of the chorus and the dull yet alarming note of the foghorn (played in the opera-house by an off-stage tuba):

PETER (*ad lib.*) *dolce*

'Turn the skies back and be-gin a - gain!'

Presto *ritmico*

VILLAGERS (men) *ppp* Pe-ter Grimes!

FOGHORN *pp*

'Old Joe has gone fish-ing and Young Joe has gone fish-ing, and

(Ex. 3)

Ellen is denied the tragic farewell aria which an earlier type of opera might have given her; instead the other villagers (soloists and chorus) remind us that fishermen's work goes on though this man or that boy be lost. The final bars recall the first orchestral interlude—dawn recalls dawn.

EPILOGUE

The Modern Scene

THAT Britten has written some 'operatic' works which are not for the opera-house at all is symptomatic of the suspicion with which many composers of different countries have viewed the old-fashioned operatic form and the conservatively inclined managements and audiences of established opera-houses. Opera has become in the twentieth century, as it was not in Mozart's or Verdi's day, a kind of 'classic' theatre, with interest concentrated on the modes of performance of a little-changing standard repertory. There is a case for saying that the Broadway musical has inherited the theatrical aliveness, and the audiences eager for novelty, which once belonged to opera.

It is significant that the most successful of Italian-born composers since Puccini, Gian-Carlo Menotti (born 1918), has established himself mainly through 'theatre' rather than 'opera' channels—and, moreover, lives in America and writes his own librettos in English. In *The Consul* (1950) he brought Puccini up to date (the opening scene, with a fugitive dashing in, exactly parallels *Tosca*); in *Amahl and the Night Visitors* (1951) he wrote the first opera for television. The successfully horrific one-act opera *The Medium* (1946) was, remarkably, later filmed with the composer as film director. In 1963 he brought out *The Last Savage* and, for television, *The Labyrinth*.

In Italy itself, considerable esteem is given to the veteran Ildebrando Pizzetti (born 1880), whose works include an operatic version (1958) of T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*. But the modern Italian opera which has won most notice elsewhere is *The Prisoner* (*Il Prigioniero*; 1950), a one-act work by Luigi Dallapiccola (born 1904). Its story of 'torture by hope', particularly relevant to the crisis of human freedom in the twentieth century, is treated with an unsensational, oratorio-like seriousness.

Among German composers Paul Hindemith (1895–1963) retained a traditionalist approach to opera, as in *Mathis the Painter* (*Mathis der Maler*; 1938) and his setting of Thornton Wilder's play *The Long Christmas Dinner* (1961). But Kurt Weill (1900–50) recoiled from the grandiosity and romanticism of opera in favour of a simpler, more direct, more popular approach. The flavour of the modern song-hit is strong in his two most notable collaborations with the playwright Bertolt Brecht, *The Rise*

and *Fall of the City of Mahagonny* (Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny; 1930) and *The Threepenny Opera* (Die Dreigroschenoper; 1928), both savagely satirical of modern capitalist society. The latter uses a modernized version of the plot, though not of the music, of *The Beggar's Opera* (see page 7).

Equally radical in his approach to the musical theatre is another German composer, Carl Orff (born 1895). Leaving aside those of his stage works which are really cantatas mimed by dancers, we may note especially *The Clever Girl* (Die Kluge; 1943) with its deliberately simple tunes, repetitive rhythms, and artless, fairy-tale atmosphere, and *Antigone* (1949), a German setting of Sophocles's play which gives complete sovereignty to the words, the voices mainly reciting on one or two notes and the orchestra mainly punctuating—but with impressive musical effect.

Of today's younger German composers the most notable is Hans Werner Henze (born 1926) with four successful works—*Boulevard Solitude* (1952), a modernization of the story of Manon; *King Stag* (König Hirsch; 1956); *The Prince of Homburg* (Der Prinz von Homburg; 1960); and *Elegy for Young Lovers* (1961), with an English libretto by W. H. Auden and Chester Kallman. The Swiss composer Rolf Liebermann (born 1910) has also written an opera in English—the one-act *School for Wives* (1958), afterwards extended to three acts in German; but a more important work of his is *Penelope* (1954), in German, characteristic of our time in its modernization of ancient myth.

In France, Maurice Ravel (1875-1937) shared the addiction of his contemporary, Debussy, and of other French composers, to Spanish themes. He wrote a one-act comedy *L'heure espagnole* (1911; an ambiguous title, probably best translated 'Spanish Time') in which clock-chimes enter the score as a naturalistic element. A similar naturalism shows in the cries of various creatures in his *The Child and the Spells* (L'enfant et les sortilèges; 1925): but here any grotesqueness is subordinated to a deep human tenderness not always evident in Ravel.

Among other Frenchmen, Francis Poulenc (1899-1963) explored two extremes—tragic, Mussorgsky-influenced operatic chronicle in 1957 in *The Carmelites* (to use the title under which *Dialogues des Carmélites* has been given in Britain) and near-operetta ten years before in his comic treatment of myth, *The Breasts of Tiresias* (Les Mamelles de Tirésias). The operas of Darius Milhaud (born 1892) are sometimes revived. More success has been won by *Joan of Arc at the Stake* (Jeanne d'Arc au Bûcher; 1938) by Arthur Honegger (1892-1955), a semi-opera in which the heroine does not sing.

Manuel de Falla (1876-1946), the most notable of Spanish composers, employed a device of deliberate artificiality in *Master Peter's Puppet Show*

(El Retablo de Maese Pedro; 1923), based on an episode from *Don Quixote*: there is an inner play, enacted by puppets, commented on by the other characters (who may themselves be bigger puppets, or live actors). The artificiality is admirably set off by the stylized music, which includes a part for harpsichord.

Russia, since the 1917 Revolution, has pursued an artistic path of its own, with composers subjected to varying degrees of political pressure. Dmitri Shostakovich (born 1906) wrote an opera called *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* which met with a 'scandalous' success for its supposed modernity in 1934 and with a 'scandalous' suppression by Communist fiat in 1936. Under the new title of *Katerina Ismailova* (the name of the heroine) it reappeared in a revised version in 1963. Other Soviet operas which have won a following in Russia include *The Decembrists* (1953) by Yuri Shaporin (born 1887) and *The Taming of the Shrew* (1957, after Shakespeare) by Vissarion Shebalin (1902-63).

But it was with the return to Russia of Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953) in the mid-1930's that the Soviet regime began to enjoy the presence of the only major operatic composer it has yet known. Of his operas in Soviet patriotic mould, most acclaim has gone to Prokofiev's version of Tolstoy's *War and Peace* (final version first performed posthumously, 1955). An admirable comic spirit is evident in *Betrothal in the Monastery* (1946), also known as *The Duenna*, after the play by Sheridan on which it is based. Before his voluntary exile from Russia, Prokofiev completed *The Gambler* in 1916, but it was not performed until 1928. He worked on *The Fiery Angel* (responding intensely to its story of medieval passions) from 1919 to 1927, but it did not reach the stage until 1955. More immediate success was won by *Love for Three Oranges* (produced at Chicago in 1921), couched in a deliberately fable-like, artificial vein of detached comedy.

In Hungary, Béla Bartók (1881-1945) wrote, for only two characters, his *Bluebeard's Castle* (1918): its mixture of scenic demands and symbolic meaning makes it difficult to stage, but it has both pathos and a sense of theatrical climax.

In America, no native-born composer has approached Menotti's success. But a certain notoriety was won by *Four Saints in Three Acts* (1934) by Virgil Thomson (born 1896) in which a non-logical text by Gertrude Stein was set to artfully artless music for an all-Negro cast. In quite a different way George Gershwin (1898-1937) used Negro singers (and Negro and jazz idioms) for his *Porgy and Bess* (1938), which has become an 'American classic'; it might have qualified for higher status had its music been as apt in dramatic shape as in melodic power. A brand of 'folky' operas by more conventionally trained composers—we may instance *Ballad of Baby Doe* (1956) by Douglas Moore (born 1893)—has proved unexportable. The most notable of today's younger American composers of opera is probably

Carlisle Floyd (born 1926) whose work includes *Wuthering Heights* (1958) and *The Passion of Jonathan Wade* (1962).

That versatile composer-conductor-commentator, Leonard Bernstein (born 1918) brought out his *Candide* (1956) as a musical, though it is near-operatic in resource. Its commercial failure seemed to indicate that it was too light for opera-goers, too heavy (and too detached in spirit) for those who flocked to the same composer's *West Side Story*. Readers may draw their own moral.

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To the analysis of individual operas Ernest Newman brought his unique blend of musical, literary, and historical skill in *More Stories of Famous Operas* (1943), *The Wagner Operas* (1949), and *Seventeen Famous Operas* (1955), all published by Knopf. The most comprehensive single volume of this nature in English is Kobbé's *Complete Opera Book*, revised and edited by the Earl of Harewood (G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1954).

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With two exceptions (which are made clear in the list) all recordings given are "complete"—that is, they have no more cuts (and mostly less) than the average opera-house performance). All recordings are in the operas' original languages unless otherwise stated.

Where stereo versions are available, their numbers are listed after mono numbers and marked with an asterisk (*).

BEETHOVEN

Fidelio

Ludwig, Vickers, Berry; Klemperer
Angel 3625, S-3625* (3)

BELLINI

La Sonnambula

Sutherland, Monti, Corena; Bonyng
London 4365, 1365* (3)

Norma

Callas, Ludwig, Corelli; Serafin
Angel 3615, S-3615 (3)

BERG

Wozzeck

Farrell, Harrell; Mitropoulos
Columbia SL 118 (2)

BIZET

Carmen

De los Angeles, Gedda, Blanc; Beecham
Angel 3613, S-3613* (3)

BORODIN

Prince Igor

Smolenskaya, Borisenko, Lemeishev, Pirogov,
Reizen; Malik-Pashayev
Period TE 1023 (3)

BRITTEN

Peter Grimes

Watson, Pears; Britten
London 4342, 1305* (3)

DEBUSSY

*Pelléas et Mélisande*Danco, Mollet, Rehfuß; Ansermet
London 4401 (4)

DONIZETTI

*L'Elisir d'Amore*Gueden, Di Stefano, Corena; Molinari-Pradell
London 4321, 1311* (3)*Lucia di Lammermoor*Callas, Tagliavini, Cappuccilli; Serafin
Angel 3601, S-3601* (2)
Sutherland, Cioni, Merrill; Pritchard
London 4355, 1327* (3)

GLUCK

*Orfeo ed Euridice*Stevens, Della Casa; Monteux
Victor LM 6136 (3) (Italian)
Danco, Simoneau; Rosbaud
Epic SC 6019 (2) (French)

GOUNOD

*Faust*De los Angeles, Gedda, Christoff; Cluytens
Angel 3622, S-3622* (4)

HANDEL

*Alcina*Sutherland, Berganza, Sinclair; Bonyngue
London 4361, 1361* (3)

HUMPERDINCK

*Hänsel und Gretel*Grümmer, Schwarzkopf; Karajan
Angel 3506 (2)

JANÁČEK

*Katya Kabanova*Tikalova, Komancova, Blachut; Krumbholz
Artia 85, S-85* (2)

LEONCAVALLO

*Pagliacci*Amara, Corelli, Gobbi; von Matacic
Angel 3618, S-3618* (2)

MASCAGNI

*Cavalleria Rusticana*De los Angeles, Corelli; Santini
Angel 3632, S-3632* (2)

MASSENET

*Manon*De los Angeles, Legay; Monteux
Capitol GDR 7171 (4)

MOZART

*Idomeneo*Jurinac, Udovick, Lewis, Simoneau;
Pritchard
Angel 3574 (3)*Die Entführung aus
dem Serail*Marshall, Simoneau; Beecham
Angel 3555, S-3555* (2)

- Le Nozze di Figaro* Gueden, Danco, Siepi; Kleiber
London 4407, 1402* (4)
- Don Giovanni* Sutherland, Schwarzkopf, Waechter; Giulini
Angel 3605, S-3605* (4)
- Così fan tutte* Seefried, Merriman, Prey, Fischer-Dieskau;
Jochum
DGG 18861/3, 138861/3* (3)
- Die Zauberflöte* Lipp, Gueden, Simoneau, Berry; Böhm
London 4319 (3)
- MUSSORGSKY
Boris Godunov Christoff; Cluytens
Angel 3633, S-3633* (4) (Rimsky-
Korsakov version)
- OFFENBACH
Les Contes d'Hoffmann Grandi, Ayars, Rounseville; Beecham
London 4302 (3) (in English; shortened
version)
- PUCCINI
La Bohème Freni, Gedda, Sereni; Schippers
Angel 3643, S-3643* (2)
- Madama Butterfly* De los Angeles, Bjoerling; Santini
Angel 3604, S-3604* (3)
- La Fanciulla del West* Tebaldi, Del Monaco, MacNeil; Capuana
London 4338, 1306* (3)
- Tosca* Callas, Di Stefano, Gobbi; De Sabata
Angel 3508 (2)
Price, Di Stefano, Taddei; Karajan
Victor LD 7022, LDS 7022* (2)
- Il Trittico* (complete) Tebaldi, Del Monaco, Corena, Merrill;
Gardelli
London 4364, 1364* (3)
- (separately)
Il Tabarro from above set
London 4151, 1151* (1)
- Suor Angelica* De los Angeles, Barbieri; Serafin
Angel 35748 (1)
- Gianni Schicchi* De los Angeles, Gobbi; Santini
Angel 35473, S-35473* (1)
- Turandot* Nilsson, Tebaldi, Bjoerling; Leinsdorf
Victor LM 6149, LSC 6149* (3)

PURCELL

Dido and Aeneas

Baker, Clark; Lewis
 Osieau-Lyre OL 50216, SOL 60047* (1)
 Flagstad, Schwarzkopf; Jones
 Odeon ALP 1026 (1)

RIMSKY-KORSAKOV

The Golden Cockerel

Kadinskaya, Yelnikov, Korolyov; Kovalyov
 Ultraphone ULP 108/110 (3)

ROSSINI

Il Barbiere di Siviglia

Peters, Valetti, Merrill; Leinsdorf
 Victor LM 6143, LSC 6143* (3)
 D'Angelo, Monti, Capecchi; Bartoletti
 DGG 18665/7, 138665/7* (3)

La Cenerentola

Simionato, Bruscantini; De Fabritis
 London 4376, 1376* (3)

SMETANA

The Bartered Bride

Lorengar, Wunderlich, Frick; Kempe
 Angel 3642, S-3642* (3) (in German)

STRAUSS, R.

Salome

Nilsson, Stolze, Waechter; Solti
 London 4247, 1218* (2)

Der Rosenkavalier

Reining, Gueden, Jurinac, Weber; Kleiber
 London 4404 (4)
 Schwarzkopf, Stich-Randall, Ludwig,
 Edelmann; Karajan
 Angel 3563, S-3563* (4)

Ariadne auf Naxos

Schwarzkopf, Streich, Seefried, Schock;
 Karajan
 Angel 3532 (3)
 Reining, Noni, Seefried, Lorenz; Böhm
 DGG 18850/2 (3)

STRAVINSKY

Oedipus Rex

Shirley, Westbrook; Stravinsky
 Columbia ML 5872, MS 6472* (1)

TCHAIKOVSKY

Eugene Onegin

Vishnevskaya, Belov; Khaikin
 MK 204

VERDI

Rigoletto

Berger, Pearce, Warren; Cellini
 Victor LM 6021
 Sutherland, Cioni, MacNeil; Sanzogno
 London 4360, 1332* (3)

- Il Trovatore* Milanov, Bjoerling, Warren; Cellini
Victor LM 6008 (2)
Stella, Bergonzi, Bastianini; Serafin
DGG 18835/7, 138835/7* (3)
- La Traviata* De los Angeles, Del Monte, Sereni; Serafin
Angel 3623, S-3623* (3)
Sutherland, Bergonzi; Pritchard
London 4366, 1366* (3)
- Simon Boccanegra* De los Angeles, Campora, Gobbi, Christoff;
Santini
Angel 3617 (3)
- Un Ballo in Maschera* Nilsson, Bergonzi, MacNeil; Solti
London 4356, 1328* (3)
- La Forza del Destino* Milanov, Di Stefano, Warren; Previtali
Victor LM 6406, LSC 6406* (4)
- Don Carlos* Stella, Labò, Christoff; Santini
DGG 18760/3, 138760/3* (4)
- Aida* Milanov, Bjoerling, Christoff; Perlea
Victor LM 6122 (3)
Price, Gorr, Vickers, Tozzi; Solti
Victor LM 6158, LSC 6158* (3)
- Otello* Tebaldi, Del Monaco, Protti; Karajan
London 4352, 1324* (3)
Nelli, Vinay, Valdengo; Toscanini
Victor LM 6107 (3)
- Falstaff* Schwarzkopf, Gobbi; Karajan
Angel 3552, S-3552* (3)
- WAGNER
- Der Fliegende Holländer* Schech, Fischer-Dieskau, Frick; Konwitschny
Angel 3616, S-3616* (3)
- Tannhäuser* Grümmer, Hopf, Fischer-Dieskau;
Konwitschny
Angel 3620, S-3620* (4)
- Lohengrin* Grümmer, Thomas, Fischer-Dieskau; Kempe
Angel 3641, S-3642* (5)
- Tristan und Isolde* Nilsson, Uhl; Solti
London 4506, 1502* (5)
Flagstad, Suthaus; Furtwängler
Angel 3588 (5)
- Der Ring des Nibelunge:*
Das Rheingold Flagstad, London, Svanholm; Solti
London 4340, 1309* (3)

Die Walküre

Nilsson, Brouwenstijn, Vickers, London;
Leinsdorf

Victor LD 6706, LDS 6706* (5)

Siegfried

Nilsson, Windgassen, Hotter; Solti

London 4508, 1508* (5)

Die Götterdämmerung

Flagstad, Svanholm; Fjeldstad

London 4603 (6)

*Die Meistersinger von
Nürnberg*

Gueden, Treptow, Schoeffler; Knappertsbusch

London 4601 (6)

Parsifal

Mödl, Windgassen, London; Knappertsbusch

London 4602 (6)

WEBER

Der Freischütz

Seefried, Streich, Holm, Böhme; Jochum

DGG 18639/40, 138639/40* (2)

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